

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER 1935

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WEDNESDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER, 1935.

Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. G. Pollock, *Gregory*) took the chair at 10.30 a.m.

QUESTIONS.**LOSS ON BEERBURRUM SOLDIERS SETTLEMENT.**

Mr. WALKER (*Cooroora*) asked the Treasurer—

“What was the total loss on the Beerburrum Soldier Settlement, including any part of such loss liquidated by the Commonwealth Government?”

The TREASURER (Hon. W. Forgan Smith, *Mackay*) replied—

“Since the inception of this soldier settlement on the 14th June, 1917, the loss in connection with soldier settlement amounts to £230,294 15s. 4d., including £54,713 17s. 10d. cost of administration and loss on disposal of buildings and other assets.”

BEERBURRUM TOBACCO UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF SCHEME.

Mr. WALKER (*Cooroora*) asked the Secretary for Agriculture—

“Will he kindly supply the following particulars relative to the Government's tobacco unemployment relief scheme at

Beeburum:—(a) The total number of unemployed who have been allotted blocks under this scheme since its inception; (b) the number now remaining; (c) the expenditure to date, including any contribution by the Department of Labour and Industry; (d) the total value of leaf produced and sold since the inception of the scheme; and (e) the area at present under cultivation for tobacco?"

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. F. W. Bulcock, *Barcoo*) replied—

"The information will be obtained."

SPECIAL TRAIN, MARYBOROUGH-PIALBA, FOR LABOUR CONVENTION DELEGATES.

Mr. MAHER (*West Moreton*) asked the Minister for Transport—

"1. Was a special train, for a pleasure run to Pialba, placed at the disposal of delegates to the Labour Convention at Maryborough this year?"

"2. Was the Railway Department paid for the use of the special train?"

"3. If so, by whom was payment made?"

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. J. Dash, *Mundingburra*) replied—

"1. Yes.

"2. Yes.

"3. The Chief Secretary."

Mr. MAHER (*West Moreton*), without notice, asked the Premier—

"As the Minister for Transport has indicated that the cost of a special train to convey delegates attending the Labour Convention at Maryborough on a pleasure run to Pialba was defrayed by the Chief Secretary's Department, will the hon. the Chief Secretary extend the same courtesy to the delegates attending the next annual conference of the Country and Progressive National Party, by providing a special train to Southport, or other seaside resort, as may be agreed upon?"

The PREMIER (Hon. W. Forgan Smith, *Mackay*) replied—

"I am prepared to give consideration to such a proposal. It is not unusual for the State to provide entertainment facilities for distinguished visitors to a given centre. Of course, the importance of the occasion and the calibre and standing of the conference are always taken into consideration."

STRIKE IN SUGAR INDUSTRY.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*) asked the Premier—

"1. On what date did the present strike in the sugar industry commence?"

"2. Was the law complied with, or is this an illegal strike?"

"3. What action (if any) does the Government propose in order to uphold the law and to protect the interests of law-abiding people?"

The PREMIER (Hon. W. Forgan Smith, *Mackay*) replied—

"1. 5th August, 1935.

"2 and 3. This matter is within the jurisdiction of the Arbitration Court,

and the Government does not propose to interfere with the court's functions, but will do all that may be necessary to vindicate and uphold its authority. Everything possible is being done to bring about a speedy settlement of the strike. Ample protection is being afforded to law-abiding people."

PAPERS.

The following paper was laid on the table, and ordered to be printed:—

Report of the Acting Agent-General of Queensland for the year 1934.

The following paper was laid on the table:—

Forty-seventh Annual Report of the Queensland Trustees Limited.

ADDRESS IN REPLY.

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE—THIRD ALLOTTED DAY.

Question stated—

"That the following Address be presented to the Governor in reply to the Speech delivered by His Excellency in opening this the first session of the twenty-seventh Parliament of Queensland:—

'May it Please Your Excellency,—

'We, His Majesty's loyal and dutiful subjects, the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland, in Parliament assembled, desire to assure Your Excellency of our continued loyalty and affection towards the Throne and Person of Our Most Gracious Sovereign, and to tender our thanks to Your Excellency for the Speech with which you have been pleased to open the present session.

'The various measures to which Your Excellency has referred, and all other matters that may be brought before us will receive our most careful consideration, and it shall be our earnest endeavour so to deal with them that our labours may tend to the advancement and prosperity of the State.'

Mr. MAXWELL (*Toowong*) [10.40]: I desire at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, and the Chairman of Committees upon your re-election to your respective positions. I also desire to congratulate the new members upon their appearance in the Chamber, and I sincerely hope that their associations with other hon. members in this Chamber in the future will have the tendency to remove much of the bitterness and class consciousness that they seem to possess at the amount. This would be for the betterment of the whole of the community and obviate the diatribes of pestilent piffle to which we often are compelled to listen.

On the Address in Reply hon. members have sufficient scope to deal with any matter they consider to be of enough importance to merit reference in this Chamber. They are not even restricted to the matters mentioned in the Speech, which our leader has said—and his statement has been substantiated not only by individual members but also by the leading metropolitan newspapers—was prolix but reticent. These characteristics have left individual members on

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this side of the House in the position of having to contradict untrue statements instead of dealing with matters that would make for the betterment of the community, for since these statements are published, it is absolutely essential that they be contradicted. A Press report on the dinner given by the Royal National Association a week or two ago, at which the hon. the Premier was present, quoted him as having said that what the people wanted was the blunt truth.

I want to ask that hon. gentleman this morning why he does not give it to them. I positively and definitely state that the Premier does not give the people the blunt truth, the sharp truth or whatever truth he aims at. One has only to review the administrative and legislative acts of the present and past Labour Governments to understand clearly why they are able to retain their seats on the Treasury benches. Both the "Courier-Mail" and the "Telegraph" have been unjustifiably criticised for their comment upon the Speech delivered by His Excellency the Governor, but that criticism has emanated from individuals who are unqualified to pose as the critics of such worthy mouthpieces of the community. The leading article by the "Courier-Mail" on the Governor's Opening Speech published on 26th August last has the caption "Prolix but Reticent Speech." In other words the Speech is described as a long, drawn-out windy one. The leading article offers this comment:—

"The Speech read by the Governor at the opening of Parliament yesterday was in accordance with the now stereotyped pattern of these sessional prologues. It was wearisomely long and it revealed scarcely anything of the Government's legislative programme. The purpose of a number of projected measures listed at the end of the Speech can only be surmised. Parliament had to go through the formality of listening to a tedious retrospect of the last twelve months, and such information as was not familiar to members will shortly be available to them in greater detail in the annual reports of various departments. The only apparent purpose of this Queensland model of a Governor's Speech at the opening of Parliament is to ensure that those who will participate in the subsequent debate on the Address in Reply shall not lack for material with which to occupy the generous quota of time allotted to them. If members submitted to a self-denying ordinance in the matter of speech-making at the beginning of a parliamentary session they would be able to give more consideration to financial estimates and to actual Bills, and there would then be no excuse for 'gagging' through important legislation in the last few days of the session, with only a pretence of deliberation and debate."

The "Telegraph," another leading daily newspaper, in its comment on the Speech published on 27th August, the opening day of Parliament, stated:—

"Not very much to excite interest, or even curiosity, was contained in the Speech which the Governor was given to deliver in opening the first session of the new Parliament. The brief reference to the financial position consisted

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of a statement that the deficit last year was some 80 per cent. less than had been estimated. This improvement is most welcome, but it should not be overlooked that even a reduced deficit makes an addition to the accumulated shortage and a further burden on the taxpayers."

Hon. members opposite contend that if the newspapers were not content with the Speech delivered by His Excellency there were at least numerous people who were quite satisfied, but my retort to that is that not 10 per cent. of the people have even read the Speech.

There is no need for me to pay a tribute to His Excellency the Governor and Lady Wilson and their family for their excellent service in the interests of this State. No man and, in particular, no Governor and his lady have created a more favourable impression upon the public by their love and affection than have Sir Leslie and Lady Wilson. They have endeavoured, and with the utmost success, to be good mixers with our people.

The Speech that His Excellency read, I repeat, was described by the "Courier-Mail" as prolix but reticent, and its deliverance, really by the Government, can be typified as a mountain in labour bringing forth a mouse. One would imagine that in times like the present the Government would offer attractive schemes for development. We have been twitted with our lack of policy, but hon. members opposite have merely promised the people that if they were returned to power they would continue their policy of the past three years. One would imagine that there would be plenty of scope for their oratorical ability without there being any need to heap abuse upon the Moore Government by describing them as wage reducers and wage slashers.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: Hear, hear!

Mr. MAXWELL: To hear that genius who interjects one would not think that Labour Governments had set the example in wage reductions. It is true that wages were reduced during the Moore regime, but the reduced wage was an effective wage, although it immediately commenced to lose its effectiveness on the return to power of the Smith Government. If any Government can justifiably be termed a deflation Government it is the Smith Government. Hon. members opposite have continuously boasted that Queensland pays the highest basic wage in the Commonwealth, but the present Government cannot take any credit for that. It is the same as it was under the Moore Government. These men in trying to cloak the position and mislead the people into believing that they, and they alone were responsible, are bringing a serious charge against the Industrial Court. So far as the sacking and deflation of public servants and the placing of others on short time are concerned, it is only necessary for me to draw attention to what happened to that section of the community when a Labour Government was in power. All I have to do is to draw attention to the statements made by hon. members opposite as to the condition of affairs, and point out how they had slipped. Our conditions had not slipped owing to the occupancy of the Treasury benches by the Moore Government. Any statement to that effect is not

the blunt truth; it is, I say that unhesitatingly, a falsehood. It is only necessary for me to draw attention to the position taken up by the former Secretary for Labour and Industry, who issued a statement dealing with the position of unemployment in 1928-29. That is a fair test to apply. That statement appeared in the "Daily Standard" in 1929, that is, prior to the Moore Government's taking over the reins of office. He said—

"The statistical survey as at 30th September, 1928, disclosed that the following number of persons were unemployed—

Casually or part time	69,664
Unemployed registered at labour agencies	7,704
Number unemployed on account of sickness	46,512
Total	123,880

It is just as well that I should give also the amount of payments made from the Unemployment Insurance Fund, as it will be a fair criterion of the position, for these payments would not have been made had the necessity to make them not arisen. The report of the Auditor-General shows that the payments made from this fund to contributors who were unemployed, in the years specified, were:—

	£	s.	d.
1923-24	149,109	5	0
1924-25	188,011	6	1
1925-26	223,228	7	4
1926-27	340,933	1	8
1927-28	390,336	13	4
Total for five years...	1,291,618	14	6

In spite of such authentic information we are told by hon. members opposite that the cause of the depression, not merely in Queensland but practically all over the world, was the acts of the Moore Government. If the Premier, as a party leader, wants to tell the people the blunt truth, why does he not do so? He does not tell the people the truth; he misleads the people. These figures prove that the Moore Government were blamed for things of which they were never guilty. I once heard a prominent member of the Labour Party say "When we get over there, we will get whatever money we can and spend it, and you fellows can come in afterwards and clean the mess up." It is time that the people woke up to the true position and gained a proper appreciation of the attitude of hon. members who occupy the Treasury benches who boast of being the friends of the workers and farmers! Why, the first thing they did for the farmers was to increase railway fares and freights and put other obstacles in their way!

It is my intention now to quote from the report of the Auditor-General for 1928-29 wherein he deals with the subject of outdoor relief. I sympathise with those people who through illness and other causes were compelled to get relief to tide them over a time of difficulty. The Auditor-General in his report states—

"The increase in this service was abnormal and indicates the widespread distress prevailing during the past year, the increased expenditure being general

throughout the State. The cost of outdoor relief has increased from £20,832 12s. 9d. in 1924-25 to £110,419 19s. 11d. in 1928-29. The figures for the past five years, covering the period subsequent to the coming into force in 1923 of the Unemployed Workers' Insurance Act of 1922 is as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
1924-25	20,832	12	9
1925-26	29,258	5	7
1926-27	46,161	18	0
1927-28	48,705	8	2
1928-29	110,419	19	11

That illustrates the condition of affairs when the Moore Government assumed office. Labour representatives have always claimed they would not be guilty of dismissing any of the public servants, and that they believed in giving them the best of wages and conditions. If the finances of the State are in a sufficiently sound position to warrant the payment of those high wages, and the people who are to receive them are competent, I certainly think they should have the best treatment possible. Labour representatives have no right to stand up in this Chamber and outside it and mislead the people, instead of telling them what the Premier calls the "blunt truth." Hon. members opposite have claimed that their party was never guilty of dismissing public servants, and never went to the Industrial Court seeking a reduction in the salaries of the State's employees. I would point out to hon. members that it was a Labour Prime Minister and Treasurer who decided that unless certain things were done it would mean ruination for Australia, and proceeded to bring about the reductions he considered necessary. According to the "Government Gazette" of 2nd August, 1922, I find that all the Labour Ministers, from the Chief Secretary down, appealed to the court for a reduction of 5 per cent. in the wages of all State employees in receipt of £300 per annum and over. In view of that fact, it is political humbug for Labour members to say that the Labour Party never appealed to the Court for a reduction in the salaries of public servants. In spite of Labour's record, hon. members opposite had the temerity to issue a pamphlet entitled "Moore, the Wrecker—the Man Who Reduced Wages." The same pamphlet states that the Moore Government sacked 7,081 employees in 1929-30. The Labour Party do not say anything about the 11,000 odd whom they caused to be sacked in 1922; nor do they say that they were responsible for the introduction of the Salaries Act reducing the salaries of those in receipt of over £300 per annum by 5 per cent. These Simon Pures would not do anything like that! It is only the Moore Government that would do such a thing! I consider it very necessary to acquaint the people outside with the exact position of affairs.

During the course of this debate the Government have been twitted with the dropping of their socialisation of industry plank. It is not necessary to publish at every street corner or even to mention during every Address in Reply debate that the Government believe in that kind of thing. The fact remains that the silence in regard to that objective notwithstanding, the work of bringing it about is proceeding. We find the Premier and others claiming for the Government the co-operation and assistance

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of private industry. Yet at the same time they are strangling private industry! I shall prove my statements, if not to the majority of hon. members, at least to the intelligent ones. It is only necessary for me to draw attention to the report of the State Labour Convention held at Emu Park, in respect of which the following report appeared in the Press:—

“Mr. J. V. MacDonald said there were ways of gaining their ends, such as taxation and competing the capitalist out of business.

“Mr. Theodore said they were all aiming at one objective, though they might have different ideas of ways of obtaining it.”

From the time that Labour took control of the Treasury benches, its members have attempted to bring about that objective. They attempted to strangle private industry by the introduction of State enterprises—which cost the State millions of pounds. I recollect that when certain returns in regard to State enterprises were published the Treasurer of that day, Mr. Theodore, said that the matter was a serious one and would be given every consideration. To them, however, it did not matter what they cost; some of them even went the length of remarking that it was not their money that was being spent. But it is the money that the Government are wresting from the commercial, pastoral, mercantile, and business concerns of this community. To prove my statement, it is only necessary that I give the House some figures showing the increase in the public debt since separation. They are as follows:—

	£	£
1859 to 1914-15 (Liberal Governments) ..	56,869,046	
1915-16 to 1928-29 (Labour Governments) ..	112,162,203	
An increase of ..		55,293,187
1930-31 (Moore Government) ..	111,622,414	
A reduction of ..		537,789

And according to statements that hon. members have heard the increase made in the public debt by the Labour Administration between taking control in 1932 and 1935 was over £8,000,000.

There is another way to analyse the position. Hon. members opposite state that they must have the money and that only persons who can afford to pay taxation are asked to do so. We are also told of the wonderful position in which the State finds itself. I wish that statement were correct. I should be only too happy to see everybody in good positions, drawing decent wages, and having that enjoyment that each of us is entitled to. Hon. members opposite know full well that that is not the case. They know full well, too, the large numbers of men who are unemployed. It was only the other day that an examination took place for the purpose of obtaining thirty boys to occupy positions in the telegraph section of the Post and Telegraph Department. Nine hundred boys applied! And previous to that 700 boys applied for admission to the Railway Department in Queensland! These figures show that instead of there being a reduction, the number of boys unemployed appears to be on the increase.

To emphasise my statement regarding the burden of taxation on individuals and

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demonstrate the manner in which Labour Administrations attain their objective, allow me to disclose the result of an examination of the figures regarding taxation. The amount of taxation per capita in Queensland has been as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
1929	5	11	11
1930	5	3	0
1931	5	0	6
1932	4	17	4
1933	6	0	4
1934	6	3	0

It will be noticed how the amount is rising. It will be seen that in 1933, when the first effects of the new Labour Administration were felt, taxation increased tremendously as compared with the amount under the administration of the Moore Government. Labour Administrations borrow large sums of money and splash it about, but do they do so to the best advantage? My answer is an absolute “No.” The money supplied to them is absolutely wasted in a good many instances. At an election meeting in the Theatre Royal we were told by the Premier that the people of Queensland had been bled white by taxation, but that relief was going to be given. Again he did not tell the people “the blunt truth.” Why not? He cannot; he is not game to do so; his party will not allow him. It is part of the policy of the party of which he is leader to crush what they term the capitalists. How many capitalists are to be found in Queensland? Not too many! And those are all on the other side. Representatives of the party opposing that to which I belong are all aiming to be capitalists. I know of men from the other side of the House who have boasted about being millionaires. I now propose to quote figures showing the progressive increase in taxation collected under the present Government as compared with the Moore Administration.

Mr. WATERS: What are you attempting to prove?

Mr. MAXWELL: I would not attempt to prove anything to the hon. member, as he has not a receptive mind and would not understand.

TAXATION COLLECTIONS.

	£
1931-32	4,189,749
1932-33	5,347,529
1933-34	5,479,945
1934-35	5,708,200

I proceed to deal with loan expenditure. The Government have been boasting of what they propose to do and how the money in the past has been wisely and judiciously expended.

One would have thought that the hon. member for Maree was addressing a jury yesterday when he attempted to put his arguments over hon. members on this side of the House. He cannot do it. Practically all Government members have talked of the rehabilitation, revival, or prosperity accruing from Labour's spending policy. The sincerity of such claim will be shown by the loan expenditure figures—

1932-33 ...	£2,188,021	(£979,221 underspent)
1933-34 ...	£3,166,481	(£133,519 underspent)
1934-35 ...	£4,785,700	(£385,700 overspent— election year)
1935-36 ...	?	

In the election year—the year in which something was to be gained—they spent the amount of money that was voted and more! During previous years they did not do it as the Moore Government would have done. They concealed this money and kept it by until the election year, when they said, “We will let the people see that we are going to be their friends. We will let them see that we have plenty of money and are going to give them the benefit of it. They could not make such a charge as that against the Moore Government. It is to be hoped that the Government will expend as much this year as they did in the year 1934-35, provided that it is done in a wise and judicious manner.

The probable receipts of loan funds for the year 1935-36 are put as follows:—

	£
From Commonwealth Loans (Loan Council, May, 1935)	3,006,000
From Repayments (£1,526,968 in 1934-35)	1,700,000
From Savings Bank Agreement (£1,086,000 in 1934-35)	1,100,000
From Counter Sales (£283,875 in 1934-35)	285,000
Total Receipts	6,085,000
Deduct estimated Deficit in Revenue Account	1,300,000
	£4,785,000

The Government here have the opportunity of spending as much money during 1935-36 as they did during the election year. I ask: Will this Government go on with the spending policy or follow Labour's traditional practice of saving up for an election splash in 1937 or 1938?

Mr. McCormack told hon. members in 1928 that there was a depression all over Australia, and the difficulty could not be overcome by spending loans, which would but lead to more unemployment. Others said the same. Hon. members opposite say that the only way of getting over this difficulty is by obtaining the money from the wealthy. I should like to know where these wealthy people are. They certainly are not so many here, as is readily seen from the report of the Commissioner of Taxes on income tax.

Another matter to which I wish to refer is the interjection last week of the hon. member for Normanby—that Mr. Scullin was forced by the banks to accept the Premiers' Plan. That statement is not true.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: Absolutely.

Mr. MAXWELL: Well, the hon. member does not know what he is talking about. I will prove that the statement of the hon. member for Normanby is untrue by quoting from the speeches made by Mr. Scullin and Mr. Theodore at the Premiers' Conference held in the months of May and June, 1931. I quote from page 171 of the conference report, which reports Mr. Scullin as stating—

“Unless the drift be stopped, public service salaries and wages, pensions, and interest could not be paid in full. Public default would be followed by a partial breakdown in public utilities, such as railways and private industry and trade. Revenue would come toppling down, and even one-half payment might become impossible.

“Unless some satisfactory plan were evolved, the Commonwealth would not be able to pay its creditors both over-

seas and locally more than 12s. in the £. The plan is the boldest operation ever attempted in Australia, and I believe its success will add tremendously to the prestige and credit of the country. The plan calls for sacrifices by all or nearly all. The banks would carry them on during the three years necessary to return to an even keel.”

What was the opinion expressed by Mr. Theodore, then the Federal Treasurer? I should prefer to accept the views expressed by Mr. Theodore and Mr. Scullin, Labour stalwarts who advocated the adoption of the plan. Speaking in the House of Representatives on 18th June, 1930, Mr. Theodore said—

“All pensions will be reduced 2s. 6d. a week. The purchasing power of money is greater now than it was a few years ago, and therefore the pensioner will not be relatively worse off than he was two years ago. According to the cost of living figures, 17s. 6d. per week will purchase slightly more food and groceries than could be bought for £1 in 1925, when the pensions were increased to £1.”

These are not opinions emanating from members of the Moore Government; they are the observations of Mr. Theodore, then the Federal Treasurer. He goes on to say—

“Undoubtedly Australia is much more generous than any other country in the matter of pensions.

“No one can minimise the severity of the economics that have been forced upon the Commonwealth—not forced upon it by its political opponents nor by outside institutions, but by the realities of the case.”

Where is there any suggestion that the banks compelled the Federal Labour Government to approve the Premiers' Plan? Such a charge is palpably untrue, and is really the kind of dope put over by hon. members opposite. I warn them that it cannot be put over here without a complete exposure being made by an unequivocal statement of the blunt truth. Mr. Theodore further said—

“I recommend this rehabilitation plan to the earnest consideration of hon. members as not only practicable but inescapable if we are to meet the present emergent position.”

There we have the considered opinions of both Mr. Theodore and Mr. Scullin.

It has been contended during the course of this debate that a solution of our difficulty may be found by the expenditure of large sums of loan money upon public works, but hon. members opposite might just as well admit the fact right away that little can be achieved along those lines. What improvement can be effected in our economic or social order by the construction of palatial buildings to house public servants? Of course, we must act fairly towards the community, but we cannot afford to expend beyond our means. If Governments are prepared to spend loan money in an irresponsible manner, relying upon taxation and still further taxation to meet interest charges, there can only be one end—an end that has already been suggested—“We will get out and the cleaning-up can be left to you.”

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I have now very little time at my disposal for a consideration of other matters that I was anxious to touch upon. I shall deal with them in the course of another debate, but before concluding my speech I feel it incumbent upon me to revert to the comment offered by the Premier upon a statement I uttered during the election campaign with reference to the number of unemployed. I say to-day that the "Economic News" is boomed, and the information therein contained is not worth the paper on which it is printed, that is, if it is to be a statistical authority available for use by public men. This publication states that during the month of January, 1935, the number of unemployed was 22,940, whilst during the month of February the number was 22,650. That is not true. I made that denial during the election campaign, and speaking in Rockhampton, the Premier, using an expression already used by the late Earl Balfour, said that the statistics issued could really be regarded as a cold, calculating, frigid lie. I have stated the truth.

Mr. W. J. COPLEY: It is not.

Mr. MAXWELL: What has the Registrar-General to say on this point? He knows more about this subject than the hon. member for Bulimba. The statement in the "Economic News" is partly true; it is misleading. It intimates the number of unionists who are out of work, but there are other people in the community who are also out of work. I received a letter from the Registrar-General enclosing a table showing the excess employees registered at the State Labour Bureaux during the years 1932 and 1934. From his table I learn that for the month of December, 1934, the number was 39,577, whilst the "Economic News" gives the figure as 19,130. For the month of January, 1935, the Registrar-General gives the figure as 43,262, whilst the "Economic News" sets the figure down at 22,940. If information is worth issuing, then let us, for God's sake, have the truth and not statements that are useful merely for political purposes. Let the people be told the truth. What do we find on investigation? I sent a letter to the Registrar-General asking for information on the number of unemployed, and he furnished me with a statement giving that information. Yet, when I use that information it is castigated as "a cold, calculated, frigid lie." It is the truth, and I challenge the Premier, or any of his satellites to deny it. I have the statement made by the Registrar-General in my hand. We know how hon. members opposite use information from the office of the Registrar-General when it suits them. They used it concerning the "lowest cost of living," "highest basic wage," "Brisbane's advantage over other capitals," and other cries. They tell us that "the Registrar-General gives convincing figures"; yet when that same official issues figures as to the number of unemployed which are contradictory of statements contained in the "Economic News" they regard them in an entirely different light. I accept the figures furnished by the Registrar-General, and I do not accept the figures given in the "Economic News"; in fact, I will not accept figures in future contained in the "Economic News," because they are not worth a rap.

I want to make reference to charges made from the Government benches as to the failure of the Federal Government to do

anything to ameliorate the unemployment problem, or to in any way help Queensland. That is another statement that is not true. I find in the "Hansard" report of a speech delivered by the Treasurer following on the introduction of the Budget in the third session of the last Parliament that he complained of the unfair treatment of State Governments by the Commonwealth Government. The answer is that whatever the Commonwealth Government takes from the people of Queensland it distributes in Queensland, more or less. It is difficult to get exact figures, but the following are practically correct:—

	1931-32.
	£
Commonwealth taxation obtained in Queensland ...	5,027,205
Commonwealth paid in Queensland—	
Interest on State Public Debt	1,096,235
Sinking Fund, State Public Debt	154,649
Main Roads Contribution	491,333
Old-age and Invalid Pensions	1,489,004
Maternity Allowance	13,240
War Pensions	817,780
Total	£4,062,241

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member has exhausted the time allowed him under the Standing Orders.

Mr. WATERS (*Kelvin Grove*) [11.22 a.m.]: I desire to congratulate the hon. members for Mirani and Sandgate, the mover and seconder of the resolution for the adoption of the Address in Reply. Both acquitted themselves very creditably, and certainly will be assets to Queensland in so far as the Labour Party is concerned.

The contributions to the debate by hon. members opposite have not been inspiring, to say the least of them. The hon. member who has just resumed his seat made the same speech that he has made for the last three years. There was no variation: It to a considerable extent afforded evidence as to why the people of Queensland rejected the Nationalist Party at the recent elections. There is no doubting the fact that the last election gave a striking indication of the success of Labour's policy, because the results gave the greatest majority for Labour that it has ever secured in this Parliament. The result was the culmination of years of fruitful legislative and administrative effort by Labour. It was a tribute to the honesty of purpose of its leaders that it was able to emerge from an election winning every seat it held prior to the dissolution of Parliament and thirteen in addition. These facts are striking evidence that the people in their wisdom felt full confidence in the Government. They indicate, also, the virtual doom of the Nationalist Party as a political force in this State. The Nationalist Party is approaching the end of its existence as a political party, for several reasons. The preponderance of strength in the Opposition is held by the Country Party representatives who come from rural constituencies, nevertheless the fact remains that the city party dominates the Nationalist machine. To that aspect of the position the farmers are at last beginning to awaken. We have the spectacle of the hon. member for Dalby

[*Mr. Maxwell.*]

dissociating himself from his old party and colleagues and forming a party of his own. He evidently knows what is in store for the remnant of his old colleagues who claim, but can only claim, to represent the farmers, for although the party is nominally a Country Party it is dominated by city financial interests that purport to speak on behalf of the farmers.

One had only to listen to the debate in this Chamber during the last session of Parliament on the Electric Light and Power Acts Amendment Bill to realise what interests were behind the Opposition. No more fierce resistance could have been offered by any Opposition than was made to that measure; and it was offered notwithstanding the fact that many of the people represented by Opposition members would benefit by the introduction of that measure. It was purely city interests in the Nationalist Party that dictated its attitude.

Another striking feature of the last election was the fact that the Douglas Credit candidates scored substantially in rural areas. This is not a coincidence. It is happening because the small farmer, who has given unwavering allegiance to the Nationalist-Country Party in the past has commenced to think for himself and has awakened to the fact that there is no hope for him if he binds himself to the Nationalist policy. The chief concern of the majority of farmers is the debt that hangs heavily upon them—every small farmer is saddled with a substantial burden of debt. What has the Nationalist Party as a party done to improve his economic position in that respect? The financial institutions, from whom relief could be obtained, are the people who dictate the Nationalist policy; and they are not much concerned with helping the small farmer, nor do they endeavour to assist him in any degree. Hon. members opposite talk loudly and long about the farmer's troubles. If they are honest in their statements and desire to bring about some substantial reform they should advocate the general scaling down of debts by about 20 per cent. to 25 per cent. in order to assist the farmer and give him that measure of relief to which he is entitled. In areas such as the Callide Valley, which has been afflicted by drought, the Government have substantially assisted him. They have given him a more generous measure of relief than financial institutions would have extended. I believe the time is fast approaching when there will have to be a general scaling down of debts, and that will apply to the worker as well as to the farmer.

Another feature of the last election was the success of Labour candidates in rural electorates. That is undoubtedly attributable to Labour's advanced policy, and the contribution it has made towards the uplifting of the farmers during the period it has been in operation in Queensland. At the present time there are many members on this side of the House representing rural electorates that were previously represented by Nationalists.

I listened with interest to the Governor's Speech, which forecast many Bills that I believe will prove of immense benefit to the State. One thing that I believe should receive the attention of the Government—I have advocated it before and I intend to advocate it until it is brought into operation—is the establishment of an intermediate hospital for the treatment of cases of mental

and nervous breakdown. At the present time there are no facilities in this State, with the exception of private hospitals—which are too costly for the average person—or an asylum, such as Goodna, for the treatment of these unfortunate people who suffer breakdowns, which are, in many cases, attributable to the state of society and modern industry. It is most distressing for people to have their relatives incarcerated in such institutions, where in any case there are no facilities for their proper treatment. I trust the Government will give serious consideration to the matter when considering building projects.

Another matter deserving of consideration is that of sick leave conditions to the outside employees of the Railway Department. After all, these men constitute the largest number and the biggest factor in the conduct of that department, but, although entitled to some sick leave they do not get the same treatment as the clerical employees. This is an anomaly. Men doing the outside work, the heavy manual work, are more entitled to sick leave than those working indoors. I am referring more particularly to the occurrence of an epidemic. Just at present Brisbane is experiencing an influenza epidemic of great intensity, and deaths have resulted because people have got out of bed too soon. It is readily understood that should a man be receiving no wages while he is at home sick he feels a natural temptation to get up at the earliest possible moment in order to resume his duties because of the effect his absence will have on the income of the household. That condition of affairs has, no doubt, resulted in the occurrence of a number of deaths during the present epidemic. In the Federal Public Service, of which I have a good knowledge, sick leave provisions apply equally to every individual irrespective of whether he or she is a labourer, clerk, stenographer, or accountant. No discrimination is made between the clerical and the manual workers. I trust the Government will give serious consideration to this matter. In fact, a good case could be made out for the grant under every award of the Industrial Court of a week's sick leave per annum to every employee. It should be made mandatory. The trend of social legislation all the world over is in that direction.

Hon. members opposite have made a claim for the further reduction of the unemployment relief tax and other forms of taxation which, not only this Government, but also others have had to employ. It is my opinion that the present position regarding unemployment warrants the continuance of the unemployment relief tax. After all, we, as a Government, have to find this necessary money somehow. It is all very well for hon. members opposite to speak about the reduction of taxation having an effect of encouraging manufacturing concerns to commence operations in Queensland. Most of their talk can be classified as "bunkum." One need only take the instance of a business concern or an individual in receipt of a net income of £20,000 per annum. On this amount a reduction of 3d. in the £1 in the unemployment relief tax would result in a saving of £250. The loss of £250 per annum is not going to be the deciding factor to a commercial concern regarding commencing operations in Queensland or otherwise—the deciding factor is the profits to be obtained. After taking into consideration all the factors

Mr. Waters.]

I consider there should be a continuance of this tax.

I desire, Mr. Speaker, to convey my congratulations to the hon. member for Fortitude Valley, who yesterday raised the very important question of the attitude of Australia towards the war crisis rapidly developing overseas. It is necessary that every public representative should state his view on matters of that kind. There is no doubt that at the present time Australia is faced with a serious position. I agree with the hon. member that the Commonwealth Government should declare their attitude. The other British Dominions have already done so. Australia should follow them in this respect and give a definite gesture as to her intention. While that matter is under consideration the representatives of the people comprising the Federal Government should give careful consideration to the huge burden of debt from which Australia is suffering owing to her participation in the last great war in 1914-18, prior to which the Commonwealth Government had practically no public debt. Compared with the amount of to-day, at any rate, it was infinitesimal. The increase is due to participation in that conflict. Australia has been saddled with a huge burden of public debt and because of repatriation payments and the like, which have to be made even till to-day, there has not been any decrease in the amount.

This country has been rewarded for its participation in the last war by the restriction of meat quotas. The imports of its beef and other primary products to Great Britain have been cut down, and I believe that these factors should weigh heavily with any Government when deciding the question of participation in another war. In any case, Australia as a nation has no economic interest in the dispute between Italy and Abyssinia. There is no justification for the people of this country being set at the inhabitants of other countries with all the frightful slaughter that must inevitably result. As a representative of the Australian Labour movement, I take the view that this country should not participate in activities overseas because those activities are no concern of Australia. We have our own destiny to think of and our own future to work out. All wars are economic in their origin, and the only people who would benefit to any appreciable extent would be the armament manufacturers and munition kings. I had the privilege recently of reading a book on the life of Sir Basil Zaharoff, head of Vickers Limited, who had the controlling interest in armament factories all over the world. This individual finished up after the last war with a fortune of anything between £500,000,000 and £700,000,000—gained by the slaughter of human beings and the destruction of life and limb. He had every Government throughout Europe lining his pockets during the war. He was consulted by the general staffs of both France and Britain during the year 1917 as to whether the war should continue or otherwise. He took the view that the war should be a decisive one and that they should inflict the severest possible defeat on the Central Powers. Thousands of people lost their lives as a consequence. As I said previously, this country is not concerned with the dispute in Abyssinia and it should not be concerned with the British Government's activities in the

Sudan or the Egyptian cotton scheme. It has its own destiny and future to work out, and it should weigh very carefully any decision that would involve the people of this land in a holocaust like that of 1914-1918. We all realise the awful nature of the tortures of a future war. Poison gas can be let loose that would wipe out a whole population over night. If the principle of arbitration is applied to labour and other industrial questions, there is no reason why it should not be applied to the settlement of an international problem of that magnitude. If the League of Nations has any justification for its existence, it should demonstrate it in this matter and see that this and other countries are not unnecessarily embroiled in war. In any case, if the crisis does develop I trust the Labour movement throughout Australia will respond and take up the challenge that was hurled at it during the war years. It stood up to its obligations during that period and came through the conflict with greater credit than ever.

There is another matter to which I believe Australian Governments should give some consideration. There was an announcement in the Press recently that the present Governor of Queensland, Sir Leslie Wilson, is contemplating accepting an appointment to the position of Governor of New South Wales. That statement was denied by Sir Leslie. In any case his term of office is drawing to a close, and I take the view, as an Australian, that upon its expiry the position should be filled by the appointment of an Australian citizen. We have in Queensland in the person of the Chief Justice a man who has acted on occasions as deputy for the present Governor, and discharged the duties with dignity and credit. The Queensland Government need go no further than Sir James Blair in their quest for a suitable Australian citizen to occupy the position.

The hon. member for Toowong made reference to the employment of youths, and in the course of his remarks referred to an examination for telegraph messengers for the Postal Department in respect of which there were 500 applicants for thirty positions. In this connection it is interesting to recall a public statement by the Premier some time ago when youths were being examined as to their previous employment with a view to placing them in new employment with the assistance of the Juvenile Employment Bureau. It was discovered that a considerable number of the unemployed youths had previously been employed by the Commonwealth Government in different departments for periods of from six to twelve months and had then been dismissed. The Premier was constrained to draw pointed attention to the obligations and responsibilities of the Federal Government in matters of unemployment. After all, the Federal Government must assume just as big a responsibility in connection with this matter as State Governments, in fact even a greater responsibility. It was ascertained that over a period of approximately five years practically no vacancies had been created nor permanent appointments made in the Federal service, and this course of action inevitably had a serious effect upon the employment not only of youths but also the adult population. After the Premier had made pointed reference to the

[*Mr. Waters.*]

obligations and responsibilities of the Commonwealth Government, the latter decided to hold an examination for telegraph messengers, and every entrant who was successful at that examination can thank the Premier of this State for a service that led to his permanent employment, whereas in different circumstances he might have been employed for a period of six to twelve months, then to be thrown on the industrial scrap-heap with others who had gone before. In connection with unemployment, the Commonwealth Government, and the Federal authorities generally are endeavouring to shirk their responsibilities, but as I said a moment ago they have just as definite a responsibility as State Governments. Plenty of facilities are available to the Commonwealth Government for the creation of employment. The Post and Telegraph Department shows a surplus of approximately £2,000,000 in a year, and this sum could be very usefully spent in the extension of telephone facilities, with the twofold object of giving service to outback people and providing employment for people out of work. In the hurry and scurry of politics to-day, when the Opposition are blaming this Government for failing to provide employment for our citizens, they overlook the fact that the Federal Government have just as great a responsibility and obligation.

I trust that the legislation foreshadowed in the Governor's Speech will be of benefit to the people of this State. I am satisfied that the Government will undoubtedly continue to enjoy the confidence of the people of Queensland.

Mr. BROWN (*Logan*) [11.47 a.m.]: First of all I desire to thank the people of the Logan electorate for the honour they conferred upon me by returning me as their representative in this Parliament. The electorate has been represented by only one other Labour man during the history of the Queensland Parliament, and he "ratted" on his party.

I congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your re-election to the high office you now occupy. I have had conversations with hon. members opposite and I have not heard one complaint made against you in the discharge of your onerous duties. You have discharged them in a fair and unbiased manner; hon. members generally recognise that you have given them a fair and square "go."

I also congratulate the Premier on his wonderful achievement of being returned once more to take charge of the Treasury benches to carry on the good work that he and his Government initiated in the last session of Parliament. The Premier and his party went before the electors with a strength of thirty-three. Not only was every one of those members returned, but thirteen new members were also sent back by the electors to assist the hon. gentleman in his good work. That is a performance that I do not think has ever been equalled in this Parliament. I am quite aware that on one occasion the Labour Party was represented by forty-eight members out of a total strength of seventy-two. The number of hon. members has since been curtailed to sixty-two, and forty-six of this number support the Government. I am afraid that three members of the Opposition are now serving their last term in this Parliament, because they only emerged from the elections by the skin of their teeth. (Laughter.) I refer to the hon.

members for Toowong, Dalby, and Oxley. It is apparent that it is only a matter of time when they will receive their walking tickets like many of their colleagues in the last Parliament.

It is uncontradicted that the Premier is the most able statesman in the Commonwealth. In the deliberations of the Australian Loan Council and elsewhere tribute has been made to his ability and due recognition made to that fact. The Government Party showed their confidence in the Premier and his colleagues in the Cabinet by re-electing them for the term of this Parliament; in view of the good work they had done the party could not have done otherwise.

I desire, too, to offer my congratulations to the hon. member for Buranda on his re-election to the important office of Chairman of Committees. That hon. member is respected on both sides of the House because of his able manner of presiding over the House when in Committee and his unbiased decisions and interpretations of the Standing Orders.

I would also congratulate the hon. member for Dalby on his self-election as leader of his party, secretary of his party, and whip of his party. It should be comforting to him to know that he received these appointments without opposition. I am sorry he is not in the Chamber to receive my felicitations.

The Opposition in a measure attribute their defeat at the polls to the redistribution of electoral boundaries. They availed themselves of the opportunity in 1932 to redistribute the electorates to suit themselves, and also reduced the number of members of Parliament from seventy-two to sixty-two. Seven strong Labour seats and three Tory seats were eliminated. Notwithstanding that the electors of Queensland sent the Moore Party about their business and returned a Labour Government to power. In the recent redistribution only one electorate in the country was eliminated and replaced by an electorate in the metropolitan area. The cause of the defeat of the Opposition was not the redistribution, it was the childish legislation that was introduced by them when they were in power. One Bill in which I was interested was an amendment to the City of Brisbane Act. In all my experience I never heard of such a foolish attempt to improve a statute. When the Act was passed in 1925 it could be described as a very fine measure. Amongst other things it gave the right of adult franchise at council elections. Notwithstanding that only six Labour representatives were returned to the council. When the Moore Government assumed office they decided to amend that measure and abolish adult franchise in local authority elections. If anybody is entitled to a vote in municipal or State government it is those men and women who have reached the age of twenty-one. The amendment introduced by the Moore Government provided that one had to be a property owner before one was entitled to a vote.

Mr. MAHER: An occupier.

Mr. BROWN: That could not have been so because I had three votes at the municipal election, which indicates that the franchise was on a property basis.

Mr. MAHER: Owner-occupier.

Mr. BROWN: On the roll on which my name appeared there were twenty-five names

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whose address was given as Singapore and one from Canada. If those gentlemen had arrived here on the day on which the council elections were held they would have been entitled to a vote, yet men and women who had lived in Brisbane all their lives were not, either because their names did not appear on the roll or because they did not own a piece of ground. The Moore Government's amendment also provided that if the home was in the joint names of husband and wife both were entitled to votes, but if the home was in the name of the husband only, the wife was not entitled to a vote. That illustrates the legislation of the Moore Government.

In that statute also the late Government reduced the salaries of aldermen. When the Act was passed by the Labour Government the salary allowance for the aldermen of the Brisbane City Council—goodness knows it was small enough—was fixed at £400 a year. The Moore Government amended the Act and reduced the salary maximum to £300. Although aldermen could fix their own salaries they were limited to £500 per annum. Notwithstanding this, 15 Tories on the Greater Brisbane City Council voted unanimously for the maximum of £300 per annum and it remains at that figure. Exception, of course, must be made in the case of those aldermen who entered the Council under the title of "Civic Reformers." These gentlemen were going to do the job for nothing! That is typical of the legislation passed by the Moore Government. It was their downfall.

Mr. NIMMO: Has not the Premier raised it yet?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. BROWN: The Premier has not raised it yet. He has not been asked to raise it. When the amendment to the City of Brisbane Act comes before the House I have no doubt that those aldermen now in receipt of the small salary will obtain an increase. If I can do anything towards gaining them an increase I will do so.

Mr. MAHER interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is making his "maiden speech."

Mr. BROWN: Reverting to the question of the adult franchise I would point out that previously an owner of twenty pieces of ground in twenty different municipal areas could record twenty votes at the municipal elections. On one occasion I recorded three votes. At that time I held the trusteeship of two places and the votes associated with them were passed on to me. I used those three votes to help put in a representative who would take two of them from me and allow me only the one vote to which I was entitled under the adult franchise.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear! Hear!

Mr. BROWN: The Labour Government on their return to power after the Moore regime reverted to the principle of adult franchise—one man, one vote. Under the old Tory regime in municipal affairs the owner of a piece of property of an unimproved value of £20 had one vote, of the unimproved value of £500 two votes, and of the unimproved value of £1,000 three votes. The number stopped at that. Hon. members will thus see that an individual could cast three votes in every ward in the Brisbane municipal area and other municipalities

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throughout the State. The amendment of the City of Brisbane Act passed by the Moore Government was worse than the legislation passed by their Tory predecessors. It was childish legislation.

Hon. members opposite have been attempting to make a great name for themselves by posing here as the friends of the farmer. They make the claim that representatives of the Labour Party have been seeking to get "in" with the farming community. Never in the history of Queensland have the farming constituencies returned so many Labour representatives as they have done at the last election. The Warwick electorate was never held previously by a representative of the Labour Party, and Warwick is one of Queensland's large farming areas. Carnarvon is another instance of an electorate returning to Parliament a representative of Labour. The farming community are seeing the light of day and realising their friends are to be found in the Labour Party. There is no doubt that the beginning of the next Parliament will find numbers of hon. members now sitting on the Opposition benches displaced by representatives who sit on the Government benches in the interests of Labour.

The solution of the unemployment problem is before this Parliament as before every other Legislature in Australia, and probably in the world. Notwithstanding statements that have been made by hon. members opposite, the position regarding unemployment in Queensland to-day is better than in any of the other States. We must admit that. I believe that the present state of unemployment is brought about by the introduction of machinery. We may get men and women back to employment for the time being, but the position is going to become worse and worse, not only here, but also all over the world, until we have a universal shorter working week. Every country in the world has been spending millions and millions of pounds in educating their peoples. One country has tried to educate its people more than another, and the more it educated them the more machinery was introduced. It did not educate the people sufficiently to realise that they must introduce a shorter working week. If one-quarter of the population of Australia is unemployed at present with the eight-hour day, I say that a reduction of working hours to six per day would result in the employment of every man and woman in the Commonwealth. Queensland cannot do it alone, nor can any one of the other States. Take, as an example, the iron trade, with which I have been connected. Fifty years ago we had a 44-hour working week in Brisbane, and, to-day, with all the machinery that has been introduced during those fifty years, the 44-hour week still operates. I say that machinery is a good thing, but I believe in it only if the working hours are reduced to combat its effect. No man or woman to-day works as hard as did the men and women of twenty years ago. To-day, in every industry, machines are doing what was then done by hand. If the hours continue as they are, we shall naturally have more unemployment, because the more machinery we introduce the more labour are we able to do without. That is obvious to any man. I say that the only way out of the difficulty is the universal introduction of a shorter working week, and the sooner the

better. It will have to be worldwide before it can hope to meet with success. I can remember the time when shop assistants worked until 10, 11, and 12 o'clock on Saturday night, and when butchers and barbers worked on Sunday. When the shorter hours were introduced the butchers, barbers, and grocers said they did not know how they were going to carry on. These things all rectify themselves in time. I am told that my father, when he was serving his time in the shipyards in Scotland, worked a sixty-hour week. The hours until ten years ago were forty-eight, and they may be less now.

I remember the figures given by the late Sir George Knibbs when dealing with the bootmakers. He said that if all the bootmakers in the Commonwealth worked on full time for twelve months they would produce five pairs of boots for every man and woman in Australia. Yet the consumption is only two pairs! You therefore have a surplus of three pairs of boots because of the introduction of machinery. It has resulted in the bootmakers of the Commonwealth not working more than half time. Forty years ago I put in twelve months at the bootmaking trade. I remember that many years ago, in a little boot factory at Stone's Corner, the whole of the work was done by hand with the exception of a little sewing on the uppers, which was carried out by the girls on the machines. If the boots were to be made by hand-power to-day bootmakers would be incapable of supplying even one-quarter of the footwear requirements of the Commonwealth; but the problem has been overcome by the introduction of machinery. Still the same number of weekly hours are being worked, and we can only overcome our economic ills by the adoption of a universal shorter working week. It must come—it must come! Fortunately we are much better situated in this State—thanks to a Labour Government, which is endeavouring manfully and enthusiastically to reabsorb the workless people in useful occupations, but they can only be absorbed permanently by the adoption of a universal shorter working week.

Mr. EDWARDS: You would bring it down to one hour a week in the finish.

Mr. BROWN: If we can produce the whole of our requirements by working one hour a week, then I see no reason why the world should not adopt it. At one time it was hotly contended by hon. members opposite that the whole of our requirements could not be provided by working an eight-hour day, but that contention was soon exploded; and if we can supply the whole of our requirements by the adoption of a six-hour day throughout the Commonwealth, then I see no reason why there should be an idle man or woman in this country. Eventually, we shall have to face up to the problem.

I have heard the hon. member for Toowong refer to the administration of the water and sewerage service in this city. I should like to remind him that although the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board was in existence in this city for a period of twenty years, its power was exercised by Tory representatives for eighteen years. It was only during the last two years of its existence prior to its absorption by the Brisbane City Council that Labour had control over its affairs, and during those two years more progress was made by the

board than during the whole of its previous eighteen years of existence.

Mr. MAXWELL: You increased the rates.

Mr. BROWN: Yes, we did increase the rates, but we lifted the burden from the small man and placed it upon the shoulders of those who could and should bear it. I have in mind business places like those of T. C. Beirne Proprietary Limited, Finney, Isles, Limited, and other big commercial houses. I have one firm in mind that previously paid £400 per annum for water and sewerage rates, but after the administration of that service was lost to Tory control equitable adjustments were made, and that business is now paying £2,300 for the same service.

Mr. MAHER: The worker pays all taxes.

Mr. BROWN: I shall give my own case as an illustration. Previously I paid £8 5s. per annum for the water service, but to-day I am paying only half that amount on the same valuation. The little man has been allowed to go scot free, whilst big firms have been called upon to contribute their fair share towards the cost of this necessary service. So, when hon. members opposite are prepared to criticise the water and sewerage services of this city, it is well that their criticism should commence from the inauguration of the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board which was under Tory control for eighteen of the twenty years of its separate existence.

In conclusion, I desire to express my pleasure at being associated with the great Labour Party in its sincere desire to improve the economic and social conditions within this State. The hon. member for Toowong has stated that he believes in telling the blunt truth; but, he claims, the blunt truth has not been stated by the Premier. Does he forget that the people of Queensland endorsed the truth uttered by the Premier prior and up to 11th May last? They are better judges than the hon. member for Toowong could ever hope to be—a man who represents dead men and dead women. However, he has not much longer to go, for I am satisfied that at the next appeal to the country we shall see him go about his political business like so many of his colleagues on 11th May last.

Mr. POWER (*Baroona*) [12.18 p.m.]: At the outset I desire to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your re-election to the important position of Speaker which you have previously occupied with credit to yourself and honour to the State.

I also desire to offer my congratulations to the Cabinet on their re-election, which was a vote of confidence by the members of the party and the giving to them of a mandate to carry on as they did during the last Parliament.

I desire also to thank the people of Queensland for again re-electing the Labour Party to the Treasury benches to take charge of the destinies of this State. I am especially pleased that the electors removed one hon. member from this House. I refer to Mr. Atherton, who administered the Department of Mines during the Moore regime. I was one of those who suffered some victimisation at his hands, and indirectly at the hands of the Moore Government, who indulged in ruthless victimisation of Labour supporters. I was not the only person who

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suffered at their hands; two other public servants who suffered are well known to hon. members. One of these men has since been returned as a Labour representative of a metropolitan constituency in this Parliament, while the other has been returned as a representative of the party in the Federal Parliament. I received notice at 11 o'clock in the morning that my services were to be terminated as a clerk in the State coal mines. I asked the head of the department the reason for my dismissal, and he gave as a reason the shortage of work. I then asked him was it not the policy of the Moore Government to give preference to married men. He replied, "The Government have decided you have to go." Evidently the Cabinet had become aware that I was associated with the political Labour movement and feared that I might learn something in my position that would not be to their advantage. I was, therefore, in their way. During my service at the State coal mine I discovered many things that did not reflect credit on the Government's administration. I observed, for example, the manner in which applications for assistance to prospectors were dealt with. In one case the warden reported to the Minister that although the applicant had no qualifications as a prospector he was a prominent member of the Country-Nationalist Party. For that reason prospecting assistance was granted to him while applications from genuine prospectors were refused. That is not an isolated case, and my statement can be verified from the records of the State coal mines.

I have not heard one item of constructive criticism during this debate from hon. members opposite. The hon. member for Cooroora referred to the reductions made in pensions when Mr. Scullin was Prime Minister, and in this manner endeavoured to belittle him. He very politely withheld from this House any information concerning the action of his Government in taking 1s. a week from the allowance paid to widows and orphans by the State. That action of his Government was infinitely worse than the action of the Scullin Government. Hon. members opposite have levelled criticism at State enterprises, but were it not for the existence of the State coal mines the Railway Department would to-day be paying a greater price for its coal than it is. The price of coal at the Bowen Consolidated coal mine is £1 a ton for screened coal and 16s. a ton for unscreened coal. The State coal mine at Bowen has built up a very fine business, and the Railway Department is not paying that mine anything like the prices mentioned. It merely pays the mine 6d. a ton in excess of the actual cost of the coal to the enterprise. That is a considerable saving to the department. Certainly some State enterprises were failures, and the Moore Government suspended their operations and disposed of them. They were not sold; they were absolutely slaughtered—given away at a minimum price to friends of those in control of the Treasury benches at the time.

Criticism has also been levelled by the Opposition at the loan policy of the Government and the finances of the State. When the hon. member for Aubigny was in charge of the Treasury benches the finances of Queensland became chaotic and the greatest deficit in the history of Queensland occurred. It is interesting to note that a member of

the Loan Council of the same political faith as the hon. gentleman had to draw his attention to the drift of the finances in Queensland. On assuming office the Labour Government were confronted with the gigantic task of eliminating the chaotic condition of affairs that was the result of three years of maladministration by hon. members who are at present sitting in Opposition and criticising the Government. During that time also unemployment increased to an enormous figure, despite the promise that had been made to make money available and find employment. When loan moneys were made available to Queensland the hon. member for Aubigny allowed the money to be lent to other States for the purpose of relieving unemployment in those States, although there were thousands of unemployed in Queensland and the number was increasing at an alarming rate. When the local authorities decided that they required certain money to carry out certain improvements of a reproductive nature—the Brisbane City Council in particular—they made application to the then Premier for money, and it was lent on condition that the rate of wages that was paid would be considerably lower than the basic wage rate, namely, £3 a week. The men engaged on the work were also called upon to work forty-eight hours a week and were only engaged for certain periods. The result was that many undertakings commenced by municipalities under that scheme exceeded the contemplated cost. The present Government make loan money available to the municipalities in the State, and, in addition, grant subsidies, and the result is works are carried out at a greatly reduced cost to the municipalities and the men engaged on the work are paid award rates of pay and enjoy award conditions. That policy has resulted in a definite improvement in the position in Queensland generally.

We know that as a result of the dismissal of many employees the wages bill in Queensland was considerably reduced; but anybody who has any conception of finance must know that the withdrawal from circulation of money that would ordinarily have been spent has a very bad effect on business generally. That was proved during the Moore regime by the fact that there were more bankruptcies in Queensland during that period than there had ever been in a similar period in the history of this State. In an endeavour to balance the budget the Moore Government decided on the dismissal of many of their employees and also introduced a system of rationing in the Railway Department, with the result that many of the employees in the Ipswich workshops and railways generally were working approximately three days a week. Despite the attempt to balance the budget in that way the deficit was continually mounting up, and were it not for the fact that hon. members opposite were turned out of office over three years ago Queensland would have gone bankrupt. Compare that policy with the policy of the present Government, who have done everything they could to assist the community generally. They have not legislated in the interests of any particular section, but on general communal lines. Considerable reductions in interest rates have been made to local authorities and to those who obtain assistance from the State Advances Corporation. The Agricultural Bank has granted concessions to the farmers and

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pastoralists during a trying period. These concessions have been of great assistance to these people and illustrate that the policy of this Government is a sound and sane one.

I am pleased to know that the Government are introducing a Bill dealing with health. The health of the community is most important. Whilst I am aware that many local authorities are carrying out health work in a proper manner I also know that others are doing nothing. I trust the Government will, if necessary, take full control of the administration of health and remove it from the control of the local authorities. I am pleased to know that as a result of the investigation made into the prices charged for electricity there has been a considerable saving to the consumer. In the metropolitan area there is an octopus known as the City Electric Light Company, Limited, which has held various franchises for many years. I have no doubt that many members of the Opposition are shareholders in that quite legitimate business.

Mr. RUSSELL: Very dirty!

Mr. POWER: The hon. member is a shareholder in butter factories. The concern mentioned is quite a legitimate business for these people to invest in, but I consider that public utilities should be controlled by either the State or a municipality. I shall be very pleased to see the day when local authorities take the control of the electricity utilities from public companies. During the very short period that the council of the City of Brisbane have been controlling the supply of some of its electricity the price charged by that authority has been considerably lower than that made by the company. It is only because the company is finding a keen competitor in the electricity department of the council that it is reducing its charges to the levels of the latter.

Another matter requiring very serious consideration is that of restriction of exports. Suggestions have been made by members of the Commonwealth Government, and by Mr. Malcolm MacDonald, M.P., who visited Queensland some time ago, that restrictions should be placed on our exports. That would have a very detrimental effect on a primary-producing State such as Queensland, which must have a market for her primary produce. To-day an export trade is being built up with a very fine standard of chilled beef, but, instead of Britain's taking the whole of the Australian chilled beef it is found that as a result of the activities of the capitalists the largest portion of her chilled beef requirements are being obtained from Argentina. Many of the capitalists of England have large sums invested in foreign countries, including Argentina. Their action in this respect is not very patriotic. During the great war Australia rallied to the call of England. There was no suggestion that a restriction should be placed on the number of Australian soldiers proceeding to the front! On the contrary the "Little Digger," Mr. "Billy" Hughes, M.H.R., told Australia that conscription should be imposed here and every man conscripted should be despatched to the other side of the world to assist Great Britain. It is only right that Britain should now reciprocate by accepting Australian produce in her market without restrictions. Britain should be patriotic enough to say, "You in Australia were good enough to send us men to help us during our struggle and we are prepared to show

you, as part of the British Empire, that we will now reciprocate by accepting any goods you can supply." On the contrary Britain is prepared to accept imports from foreign countries rather than Australia.

According to the Speech of His Excellency a number of Bills are to be presented to this House; and I am quite sure their passage will prove of advantage to the people of Queensland. The work of this Government will be carried out on the basis of the promises made by the Premier, which will be put into effect during the present Parliament.

Mr. NICKLIN (*Murrumba*) [12.35 p.m.]: At the outset, Mr. Speaker, I should like to associate myself with other hon. members in their congratulations to you on your election to the Speakership of this Parliament. I am sure your record during the last Parliament met with the approval of both sides of the House. I desire also to add my tribute to His Excellency. The initial portion of the Speech read by him on the opening of this session dealt with his activities in Queensland and showed that during the past three years he lost no opportunity of making himself acquainted not only with the vast areas of the State but also with its people in all sections of the community. As a result he has endeared himself to the people of Queensland. I venture the opinion that Sir Leslie Wilson is one of the most popular Governors this State has had. I feel certain that when the time arrives for His Excellency to leave and return to England he will prove to be a very valuable ambassador for Queensland. When we consider the record of His Excellency and the comment made during this debate regarding the value of a "local" Governor as against an "imported" official, it appears to me that the record of Sir Leslie Wilson is such as to make it almost a necessity for Queensland to have as her representative of the King a man from overseas.

The Governor's Speech presented to Parliament on this occasion did not give any great indication as to what legislation the Government are going to bring forward during their present term. It is more a statistical review than a forecast of legislation. I think it would have been much better, not only for this Assembly, but also for the people of Queensland, if more of that Speech had been devoted to giving an indication of what legislation the Government are going to bring forward.

During the debate on the Address in Reply it has been particularly noticeable that the speakers on the other side of the House have taken this opportunity, as they have done during the last three years, of flogging the late Moore Government. I do not know what they would have had to make speeches upon if it had not been for that Government. I think it would have been much better if, instead of flogging the Moore Government and making many untrue statements, they had brought forward some suggestion of value, something constructive that would have assisted us to further the progress of this great State of ours.

Quite a number of speakers on the Government side have during this debate accused the Moore Government of sending money out of this State while our workers in Queensland were starving. I think that is rather stretching the fact, because I do

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not think any member in this Assembly can bring forward evidence that any one starved in Queensland because of the action of the Moore Government. Certainly, there may have been people in Queensland, as in other parts of the world, who did not get as much nourishment as they should have, but to say that people were starving is rather an exaggeration.

This practice of loaning surplus funds to other States was not introduced by the Moore Government. The previous McCormack Government, who had large surplus funds at their disposal, lent £250,000 to the Southern States at interest, which was not returned to Queensland until five months after the Moore Government were returned to power. It was not the wish of the Moore Government that that money should be lent to the other States. The financial position at that time necessitated the pooling of the resources of all the States and the Commonwealth of Australia. The Queensland Government had certain sums of money available, and by subscribing to the Premiers' Plan, agreed that they be utilised for the benefit of Australia as a whole. That was quite good business and showed greater acumen than is displayed by the present Government. The Moore Government lent that money to the Southern States at 5 per cent. interest and thus received some benefit from their surplus funds. What have the present Government done with their surplus cash balances during recent years? They have not earned any money with the large cash balances they have hoarded up, but they have kept them to expend, for example, in the manner they did during the last twelve months just prior to an election. They kept that money in current account in the various banks in Australia where it could earn no interest. Consequently, the action of the Moore Government in lending their surplus funds at interest was of greater benefit to the State than the action of the present Government in keeping large cash surpluses at current account. We have also heard during the debate the statement that the Moore Government were a low wage Government. If the Moore Government were a low wage Government, are not the present Government equally a low wage Government? The basic wage has not been increased during the last three years. Exactly the same basic wage is paid to-day. Undoubtedly there has been an improvement in the financial position of the State, but does that not offer a sufficient justification to hon. members opposite to advocate an increased basic wage instead of contenting themselves with accusing the Moore Government of being a low-wage Government? I confidently contend that the basic wage paid to-day is a less effective basic wage than that paid during the time of our Government. To-day the cost of living is increasing and the effective purchasing power in the hands of workers in receipt of the basic wage is less to that extent than it was during the period of our Government. The present Government are guilty of reducing the wages of the workers by doubling the unemployment relief tax, which, combined with an increase in the cost of living during recent years, makes the present nominal wage a less effective wage than that paid during the period of the Moore Government. The

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epithet "low-wage Government" would be better directed against the present Government.

It has been contended by hon. members opposite that our advocacy of a reduction in the unemployment relief tax is merely intended as an attempt to reduce the benefits under the unemployment relief scheme. Nothing of the sort. If the statements by the Premier and hon. members opposite concerning the improved financial position in this State are correct then they would be justified in reducing the unemployment relief tax by at least 50 per cent. At the present time there is approximately £1,600,000 to the credit of the Unemployment Relief Fund—a sufficient argument in itself in favour of a reduction in the tax with a continuance of the existing benefits.

One pleasing feature of this debate is the sentiments expressed by the recruits to the Government ranks representing rural constituencies. It is evident from their remarks that more interest is being taken in the affairs of the man on the land by members of the present Government than was the case during the last Parliament, and I express the hope that those hon. members will continue to exhibit the same interest in the affairs of the primary producers. I hope that they will make their presence felt by carrying those sentiments into the caucus room, and that they will there carefully guard the undoubted rights and interests of the primary producers. However, I am afraid that if it ever comes to a showdown between city and country interests within the Government party the city interests will prevail. Still, I am satisfied, judging from the speeches delivered by the new Government members representing rural constituencies, that more interest will be shown in the Labour caucus in the primary producer than was shown during the last Parliament, and that as a result benefit will accrue to rural districts.

Much has been said during this debate concerning agricultural organisation, but, unfortunately, it has been unfairly contended by hon. members opposite that the credit for the move in this direction is due entirely to the Labour Government. I have always given credit to those gentlemen who were responsible for the introduction of the very excellent agricultural legislation in existence in this State to-day, but it is unfair for Government members to refuse to give due credit to the Country Party section of the Opposition for the wholehearted support it gave to the Government when that legislation was introduced. The hon. member for Cooroola has reminded hon. members opposite that the agricultural organisation legislation was introduced into this House by Mr. Theodore and improved by Mr. Gillies, and that it received every support from the Country Party section of the Opposition. No fewer than nineteen vital amendments suggested by the Country Party section were accepted by the Government, and led to the undoubted improvement of the agricultural organisation legislation, making it of greater value than it would have been had it been enacted in its original form. Any amendments that the Government may introduce to improve the existing agricultural legislation will receive the support of the Country Party section of the Opposition, which comprises men who

have taken an active part in the organisation of many primary industries in Queensland, and who, being in close touch with various primary industries, can render valuable help on agricultural matters generally. I trust that due respect will be paid to the opinions of these hon. members when any agricultural legislation is being considered this session.

I urge those hon. members on the Government side who are advocates of the organisation of primary industries to give grave and urgent consideration to the needs of one section of primary producers in Queensland.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member has my sympathy in his endeavour to make a speech whilst audible conversation is proceeding in close proximity to him.

Mr. NICKLIN: I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I refer to the milk suppliers of the metropolitan area, who, having no effective organisation in their industry, are suffering severely. It is essential that some consideration should be given to these people. At the opening of the last Parliament reference was made to a projected Milk Bill, but although three years have elapsed that Bill seems to be as far off as ever, and it is noteworthy that the Governor's Speech on this occasion makes no mention of it. For a number of years the milk producers have been receiving very low prices for their commodity, which, coupled with severe winter conditions, has resulted in so serious a position that many milk producers are on the verge of bankruptcy. Indeed, if some assistance is not forthcoming to enable milk producers to get at least a living wage, many of them will be forced to the wall and compelled to apply for unemployment relief benefits. No reason exists why legislation should not be enacted for an organisation of the industry that would enable milk producers to obtain a greatly increased price for their product, without imposing any higher price on the milk consumer in the metropolitan area. One objection advanced to the introduction of a Milk Bill is that such legislation would have the effect of increasing the price to the consumer. Such is not the case. There might be a slight increase, because at the present time milk is being retailed at prices that are unpayable not only to the vendor but also to the producers. It is the poor, unfortunate producer who is the sufferer from this cut-throat competition.

The suggested milk legislation is not unique. It operates successfully in New South Wales, Victoria, and Western Australia, where an increased return to the producer has not involved a rise in the price to the consumer. The average price received by milk suppliers to the metropolitan area is approximately 6d. a gallon, and as the retail price is 6d. a quart, it may be said that, so far as the producer is concerned, three quarts of every gallon of milk go to pay the costs of distribution. That huge margin between the return to the producer and the amount paid by the consumer could be more equitably bridged if the milk producers were given legislation enabling them to put into operation the scheme already submitted by them to the Minister. All the objections to the Milk Bill raised by the Minister last session have been overcome by the producers, who are unanimous in their appeal to the Government for justice to enable them to receive an adequate return for their labour.

One of the most serious problems confronting the State at the present time is the unsatisfactory position of the primary producers generally. In that connection hon. members have had distributed to them recently a booklet entitled, "A Plea for the Farmer," written by the Rev. Father A. J. Mills, B.A., and I commend to the House the able and thoughtful articles published therein. I will quote one paragraph, which deals with the position of primary producers in a very able manner—

"It is true that the material prosperity of a people is to be desired, but material prosperity depends upon its source. Material wealth must decline like a river, the source of which has dried up, unless the rural industries are prospering. When the people on the land are prospering their prosperity reacts on the whole community. Their prosperity is the first condition to general well being."

I think that puts the matter very clearly. So long as our primary producers are in their present position the State cannot continue to advance, and one of the important matters this Parliament should concentrate on is the improvement of their position. The primary producers cannot be classed as prosperous at the present time; and I consider there are three things operating to bring about that state of affairs: first, the reduced price received for their products during recent years; secondly, the burden of debt that is being carried by the producers; and thirdly, the increased costs and taxation that primary industry has to bear. Reduced prices for primary products are world wide, and I do not intend to deal with that aspect of the matter. The main difficulty experienced by the primary producer is the burden of debt he is called upon to carry. That has been brought about through no fault of his. Many of them took up land after the war when land prices were very high and when world prices for our primary products were also very high. So long as those prices were maintained the primary producers were able to meet their commitments, but in recent years, owing to the tremendous fall in the price of primary products, they find they are unable to meet their obligations to the banks, financial institutions, and co-operative associations that have supplied them with products and machinery.

I notice that the Government intend to introduce a Farmers' Assistance (Debts Adjustment) Bill to deal with the sum of money that the Commonwealth Government has made available to the States for the composition of farmers' debts. I do not know what the provisions in the Bill will be, but I am afraid it will not adequately deal with the position. If the primary producers are to be put on a sound financial basis I think the Government, by means of the Agricultural Bank, will have to render assistance. Many of our small primary producers who are clients of the Agricultural Bank will not receive any assistance through the Bill. It would be of great assistance to the primary producers if the Government wrote down some of the present capital values on the land. Producers would then be enabled to meet their commitments; but on the present capital values of their properties it is practically impossible for them to do so. The primary producers are not worried by the

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rate of income tax, because they do not earn sufficient to make them liable for income taxation; but the relief taxation is a burden that falls heavily on them. Many of them are called upon to pay large sums in relief taxation when they have actually lost on the working of their farms during the year.

Another way in which the Government could assist the primary producers in their present difficulty by endeavouring to reduce some of the costs they are called upon to bear, particularly their marketing costs, is by adjustment of railway freights. Marketing costs, although not a very great sum individually, in the aggregate amount to a considerable figure. One way in which considerable assistance could be given is the reduction in freights on many products. I admit that the present schedule of freights imposed on the primary producers is very lenient in some respects, nevertheless there are alterations that could be made in the classification of goods and the incidence of charges that would be of assistance to primary producers. An irritating charge, which particularly affects the fruitgrowing section of producers, is the stamp duty of 2d. imposed on every interstate cheque when paid into a bank in Queensland. In addition to paying the 2d. duty stamp on all cheque forms used in Queensland there is a further imposition of 2d. a cheque on cheques received from Southern fruit agents for the proceeds of the sale of Queensland fruits in the South. This charge could very well be eliminated. During a period of twelve months the total is a burden on the fruitgrowing industry of a very considerable amount, inasmuch as the majority of growers at least receive one cheque a week from the Southern States.

During the debate this morning it was pleasing to note the interest in primary producers displayed by the hon. member for Kelvin Grove. He made the suggestion that the financial institutions should give relief from their burden of debt. May I be permitted to point out that quite a number of banking and financial institutions in Queensland have already done their bit in this respect? There are instances where the banks have been carrying the producers for years. They have paid the rates on the properties of the producers and endeavoured to place them on a sound basis in order that they will be able to meet their obligations to them. What is required now is that in addition to the assistance promised by the Commonwealth Government there should be some assistance from the State Government, through the Agricultural Bank, along the lines I have suggested. I refer to the consolidation of debt and the writing-down of capital values on a number of properties.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Why specify the Agricultural Bank? Have not the other banking institutions an equal responsibility?

Mr. NICKLIN: Yes, but of the other banking institutions many have already taken action along the lines suggested. I feel certain that if all sections of the community would join in this endeavour to replace our primary industries on a financial basis it would assist greatly towards the financial recovery of Queensland.

A considerable portion of the Speech delivered by His Excellency dealt with drought insurance. This is a problem that should exercise the minds, not only of the

Government, but also of all the people of the State. It is pleasing to note that the Government realise their responsibilities and are endeavouring to assist in overcoming the result of drought ravages. Up to the present many schemes have been put forward. Although none of them may be the scheme eventually adopted, nevertheless they will at least form some basis from which may arise one that will be for the betterment of Queensland. Many years ago the Council of Agriculture investigated a scheme in connection with the storage of fodder, and although the inquiry did not do much towards the solution of the problem I think that there are possibilities regarding the storage of maize. In fact, the possibilities regarding maize are greater than those in respect of hay and other products. The problem is one that should be dealt with as though the State were engaged in a war against the menace of drought. During a time of war the most important thing is the keeping open of the lines of communication. In the war against drought the lines of communication in Queensland should be kept open by having effective stock routes and constructing a railway line through Charleville, Tambo, and Blackall, linking up the already existing Western lines. It is not very often that Queensland is afflicted with a drought that affects the whole of the State at one time. If we had adequate lines of communication by which we can shift starving stock from drought areas to areas containing sufficient food it would be a very big factor towards alleviating the ravages of drought in this country. It may be said that the construction of this railway between Charleville and Blackall would not be as economic as the construction of a good road. That is a matter of opinion. Personally, I think the railway would serve the purpose better than the road. Stock could be transported more efficiently and more quickly by rail than by road. The construction of this railway would open up a large avenue of employment and utilise some of the surplus in the Unemployment Relief Fund. This railway would not be in constant use, consequently the whole of the old railway material available in Queensland could be used in its construction. In many parts of our main line tracks we are replacing lighter rails with heavier rails. Those lighter rails would suit for the connection between Blackall and Charleville, which, in conjunction with the proposed improvement of our stock routes, would be a very great factor towards reducing the drought menace in this State.

Another section of the Governor's Speech that calls for comment is that dealing with land settlement. I agree with the policy followed by the Government during the last three years of opening up various areas in this State for settlement but, in considering the whole question of land settlement it is very necessary to consider whether the product of the land opened up will find a market. To urge greater land settlement is no solution to our problem if that land is going to produce commodities that the world does not require or for which there is no market within our own borders. We have had too many instances in the past of failures, where the possibility of the sale of the product of the land had not been investigated. We have one very notable example at Beerburrum, where some 300 or 400 soldier settlers were placed to produce

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pineapples, no effort being made to provide a market for those pineapples, with the result that if it had not been for the fact that the settlement was such a ghastly failure the pineapple industry of Queensland would have been ruined. That settlement, according to the figure given in the House this morning in reply to a question, cost the country over £230,000. I hope that in any future land settlement advantage will be taken of the examples of the past where failures resulted because the question of a market for the products of the land was not considered.

There are one or two measures in the legislation forecast by the Governor's Speech that are particularly interesting to my electorate and myself. The Fish Supply Management Bill is needed, as fishermen during recent years have not received an adequate return for their labours. I hope that an effort will be made in this Bill to control the whole of the fishing industry in order that the men engaged in it will receive that just return.

Another Bill that I await with interest is the Statistics Bill. I hope that it will provide for the proper collection and compilation of statistics relating to agricultural production and distribution. Agricultural organisation, especially in its application to marketing problems, can be seriously hampered by the lack of adequate statistics. I hope that the Bill will enable these vital and interesting statistics to be collated on a useful and instructive basis so that errors in the marketing of primary products may be materially mitigated.

Mr. CLARK (*Fitzroy*) [2.13 p.m.]: As a new member to this Assembly I desire first of all to congratulate the hon. members for Mirani and Sandgate, the mover and seconder respectively of the motion before the House, on their very able speeches, and to extend my congratulations to the Premier upon his re-election to his high and honourable position, to the members of the Cabinet, as well as to yourself, Mr. Speaker, and to the Chairman of Committees upon your re-election to your respective important posts in the Chamber. Lastly, and with equal warmth, I express my unstinted appreciation of the faith reposed in me by the electors of Fitzroy in electing me as their representative in Parliament. I express the hope that I shall long continue to be the recipient of their confidence, and their representative to carry out the important work they entrust to their member.

One of the most vital problems confronting the Government is that of unemployment, concerning which much has been said by hon. members. The present Government have made a splendid effort to reduce unemployment in this State, and they have succeeded in a very appreciable measure, but we still have a large body of people in search of permanent employment. The policy of the Government has resulted in improved trade and commerce and in brightening homes where previously gloom prevailed. I share the view expressed by the hon. member for Logan that permanent employment can be provided only by a reduction in the weekly working hours, but there must be no reduction in wages in an endeavour to achieve this end. If wages are reduced then the purchasing power of the people is reduced accordingly and this economic factor in turn must make for further depression and stag-

nation in industry. The adoption of a shorter working week as a solution of the unemployment evil is a national one, and should be grappled with by the National Government, leaving to the States the duty to interpret the desires of the Federal Parliament by providing for a shorter working week within the respective States. Recently the representatives of the Federal Government at the International Labour Conference at Geneva voted in favour of a universal forty-hour week; the time is now opportune to adopt a universal forty-hour week, but with the maintenance of the present wage level or purchasing power.

The Governor's Opening Speech discloses that the present Government gave careful consideration to the many social and economic problems that called for attention during their last term of office, but it also suggests that many more vital problems remain to be tackled in a more intensified way. I am happy to note that the confidence reposed in the Government has made for increased prosperity within the State, and to such a degree that from the financial standpoint the budgetary position showed an improvement over that of the previous year by £563,191. That is evidence that the Labour Government in the last three years faithfully discharged their duties to the State.

It is admitted on all sides that the number of unemployed has been reduced; still, persons unable to secure work have to be cared for, and in that connection it is pleasing to note that the Government have improved the conditions of intermittent relief workers by enabling them to secure benefits to which they are justly entitled.

On the question of health, which to my mind is one of the most essential activities of the State, credit must be given to the Home Secretary for the excellent work carried out in the construction of general and maternity hospitals, baby clinics, and dental clinics. The dental clinic that has been established in my district has been a decided boon to the people of Rockhampton and surrounding districts; indeed, so great is its utility that the Rockhampton Hospitals Board has had to consider the question of additional staff to cope with its increased work.

The Government have established ninety-three maternity hospitals throughout the State. They are essential in the interests of mother and child welfare. After all, it is the duty of the State to see that proper care and attention is given to the health of the mother and the child.

The Governor's Speech shows that a marked improvement has taken place in the railway revenue, which is a true index of the improved position of many of our primary industries. Under the control of the Minister for Transport, the railways are functioning for the benefit of the Queensland people, in addition to which a considerable volume of employment has been created on railway construction work and in the various railway workshops of the State. Perhaps the finest train ever built in Queensland has recently been put into commission on the Queensland railways, and I understand that two more such trains will be built and put into traffic in the near future.

The vigorous policy of public works and main roads pursued by the Government has

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resulted in employment being found for a large number of men, estimated at approximately 20,000. It must be remembered, too, that indirectly many other men are employed as a result, because a vigorous public works and main roads policy naturally has a beneficial effect on the timber and other industries.

The policy of the Government in subsidising approved loans to local authorities on a fifty-fifty basis has been welcomed, not only by the local authorities who have been able to embark on sewerage, drainage, and other beneficial schemes, but by the large number of men who have been absorbed from the unemployed market. In my own electorate the Rockhampton City Council is undertaking sewerage work costing thousands of pounds that will afford some relief to the unemployment situation.

In the course of this debate few hon. members have touched upon mining. Before I express pleasure at the splendid effort made by the Labour Government to revive the industry, I would point out that the hon. member for Cooroora was incorrect when he stated that the Moore Government were responsible for the reopening of the Mount Morgan mine.

During the time the Moore Government were in power the Mount Morgan mines were lying idle. The Government dilly-dallied with the matter, and the people at Mount Morgan thought the mine would be reopened; but it was not until the Labour Government were returned to power in 1932 that the mines were reopened, and our thanks are due to the Secretary for Mines for his efforts in that direction. That mine is at present in a thriving position, and the following figures relating to it for the years from July, 1932, to 1935, should be interesting to hon. members:—

Men employed	600
Tons of ore treated	540,000
Production—	
Ounces of gold	107,000
Tons of copper	1,700
Total value	£650,000
EXPENDITURE.	
£	
Labour	230,000
Lease rents, shire rates, and rail freights	33,000
Stores purchased in Central Queensland	40,000
Other stores, machinery, and other expense:	139,000
Sea freights and treatment charges	90,000

These figures illustrate the large amount of work that has been found for the unemployed, not only in the mining industry in Mount Morgan, but also indirectly in other trades and callings. Mining is one of the best industries for the absorption of labour. It assists practically every other industry in the State. The efforts of the department and its officials resulted in Queensland's attracting special attention at a conference of the Commonwealth and State Ministers recently held in Melbourne, and that in turn has resulted in Queensland's securing a material benefit by way of having a larger amount allotted to it than was allotted to any State for mining research—namely, £70,000. Although there are no tin mines

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in my electorate, I have heard it stated that that phase of the mining industry has been well treated. Tin mining is known as the small man's industry. Mount Isa is another mining centre that has been a benefit to Queensland. Mount Isa has assisted Queensland to a great extent, and the intention to spend £500,000 on a treatment plant for sulphide ores in that centre will create more employment for the people of Queensland. The Mount Morgan Company is extending its plant and building new dams for the conservation of water, and is engaging men every day, which will relieve the unemployment in Mount Morgan and the Central district generally. The Mount Chalmers mine is situated adjacent to my electorate and worked well in previous years, but had to close down owing to the depression. It is now a producing unit again. The Hidden Star mine, situated in my electorate, has been reopened recently, and is now showing very good results. High hopes are held out that the old Hector mine, which was working years ago, will make a recovery. The old Hector mine and several other mines ceased operations when gold prices were low, but with the high prices prevailing they should be payable propositions.

As an old resident of Gympie, I welcome the efforts of the Secretary for Mines to revive that once famous field. I think the money granted for boring at Gympie, Charters Towers, and Clermont will prove to have been a wise expenditure. I am hopeful that these ventures will assist Queensland to get out of the difficulties that at the present time she is passing through. Should any one of these fields make good, the unemployment problem will be solved to a large degree.

The action of the department in the decentralisation of its geological staff meets with approval. Miners will now be able to obtain speedy reports on their shows. Previously a miner in the bush had to wait weeks—and in some instances months—to obtain the services of a geologist. Owing to decentralisation a geologist is now stationed in the Central district, and the time occupied by the official in reaching a mine for the purposes of inspection is not very great. The miner obtains the benefit of the knowledge of the geologist at an early date, and can decide promptly whether to proceed with his work or abandon the show. In the "National Handbook of Australian Industries" the following passage is to be found:—

"The Queensland Mining Acts offer special inducements to those wishing to obtain rights to explore large areas, gold mining leases being granted for areas up to 100 acres, mineral leases up to 320 acres, and dredging claims up to 400 acres. The Government is endeavouring, by all means at its disposal, to facilitate investigations by mining companies and to attract overseas capital to Queensland. It has made available extensive areas, known to be metaliferous, for geological examination and prospecting under conditions which, while safeguarding the interests of the State, are singularly attractive to both bona fide mining corporations and syndicates prepared to spend from £5,000 to £10,000 annually on detailed geological surveys and other scientific methods of

work. This is a form of State encouragement to mining which not only ensures the expenditure of capital on bona fide development work, but offers inducements and removes obstacles previously in the way of the expenditure of overseas capital in the State of Queensland."

This will be the means of encouraging capital to come into Queensland and consequently help the rehabilitation of the mining industry. At the present time it is well known to every hon. member that the industry that constitutes the backbone of Queensland is broken. I refer to the great wool industry. The mining industry has come to the rescue on one or two occasions, and the following figures will show that it may be again the means of rehabilitating the State. The gold yield of Queensland in the years stated was—

	Fine ounces.	Value. £
1930	7,821 ...	33,224
1934	115,471 ...	490,490

These figures are based on the value of gold at £4 14s. 11½d. a fine ounce. At the enhanced value of gold, which fluctuates daily, but was in the vicinity of £7 a fine ounce, the gold yield for 1934 was worth well over £800,000. Mining in Queensland has been encouraged to proceed along sound lines, and whereas no credit is claimed by the Government for the enhanced price of gold, credit must be given to them for the increased quantity being won. History appears to repeat itself. Thanks to gold, the State of Queensland is now on the high road to prosperity after a period of depression, in much the same way as it enabled the State to survive during a previous period of financial trouble and stark business depression.

Another matter in connection with the mining industry that concerns a large portion of my electorate and should receive the immediate attention of the Government, although no mention was made of it in the Speech of His Excellency, is that of broadening the benefits of compensation to men suffering from industrial diseases. Earnest consideration to this necessity should be given by the Cabinet and the Government. Why should a victim to industrial disease linger on for years, a burden to himself and to his relatives, and without assistance at all comparable with that extended to a man who is killed instantly by accident? Sufferers from industrial diseases are at a great disadvantage. They receive £1 a week only, whereas the ordinary worker's compensation for a married man is £2 a week.

The maximum benefit to the industrial disease sufferer is limited to £450 as against £600 for sudden death or £750 for permanent incapacity. For this purpose, too, a special tax is placed on the industry, and as we are making every effort to-day to revive mining, I ask: How can we expect results if this burden is continued? The Government should bring this incapacity under the general scheme of compensation. The compensation should also be made payable, irrespective of the period that elapses between the time a man ceases to become actively engaged in the industry and the time he is declared a miner's phthisis patient. Why should the men in sheltered occupations receive greater benefit and pay lower premiums than those who carry their lives

in their hands every time they enter a mine?

In conclusion, I express the hope that the Cabinet and hon. members who represent mining will assist in rectifying this injustice to men who have been stricken down with miner's phthisis. I say that in all sincerity because I have had a great deal to do with sufferers from it. In my opinion it is one of the deadliest diseases for a man to contract. A man may be healthy and vigorous this year and within twelve months be dead. Much can be done to curtail this dreaded disease. I do not say that it can be completely obliterated, but I do say that if the Mining Acts were amended to compel the companies controlling mines to keep dust down to a larger extent than is done at present the Government would be doing one of the greatest acts ever done for the mining industry in this State.

Mr. H. WILLIAMS (*Windsor*) [2.38 p.m.]: As one of the new members, I naturally feel a little nervous upon entering this debate. I wish to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, upon your election. I am sure that your fairness and justice during the last Parliament were a big factor in your unopposed choice for that position.

I also offer my congratulations to the Premier upon again being elected to carry out the duties of that high position of this State with a stronger party than he had when he went to the polls. Whilst in a congratulatory mood I congratulate the Leader of the Opposition upon his re-election to that position, and his political boss, Mr. McGill, upon escaping the "ginger group," as they were called in the "Courier-Mail" because we understood that the "ginger group" was out to clean up after the election.

During his speech, the hon. member for Cooroora stated that there were seven Gympies in the Chamber. More power to Gympie! But I am sorry that six of them are sitting on this side of the House and one on the other side. On this side he would be amongst his Gympie colleagues and would feel more at home. (Laughter.)

I thank the people of Windsor for returning me as their Labour representative. Like Logan, Windsor has been represented only once before in this Parliament by a Labour member, and that was something like twenty years ago. On this occasion Labour again won the Windsor seat, and I trust that in three years' time, when I go back to face my electors, after my discharge of the responsibility they have placed upon me in this Chamber, I shall again be returned to look after their interests in the State Parliament.

On the 11th May last the people of Queensland were asked to decide between two policies—one put forward by Labour, a policy of reconstructive work and wages; the other put forward by our opponents, a policy of stagnation, reduced wages, and unemployment. The people in no uncertain manner returned the Government of which I am pleased to be a supporter to carry out the policy of work and wages for the unemployed in Queensland.

Unemployment is the greatest evil that can befall the people of Queensland, and credit must be given to the State Labour Government for their efforts to alleviate it. With the Brisbane City Council, they are doing all that is humanly possible to re-employ all men on full time.

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When I was first returned as an alderman of the Brisbane City Council approximately 500 men were employed upon sewerage construction under the rotational relief scheme, but thanks to a Labour council, acting in conjunction with a Labour Government, there are now approximately 1,500 men on full time employment in sewerage work. The Brisbane City Council, as to-day constituted, is a Labour council and no hon. member in this Chamber can gainsay the fact that by the useful co-operation of a Labour council with a Labour Government much is being done in the interests of the people as a whole.

We have been criticised because the Labour Government decided to embark upon a loan programme providing for the carrying out of important public works, but my reply is that a similar policy should have been carried out in Queensland during the dark days of the depression. If that policy had been pursued during those years of distress the majority of the people would eventually have been placed in full time employment instead of large numbers being totally unemployed or engaged for one or two days a week, which was the position when Labour was returned in 1932.

In delivering his speech during this debate the Leader of the Opposition asserted that there was a complete absence of any reference in the Governor's Speech to Labour policy and that it was a speech that might quite fittingly have been delivered by Mr. Stevens in New South Wales. If that be the case then the hon. gentleman has little to growl about, but evidently Mr. Stevens is beginning to see the light and is prepared to follow the lead so ably given by the Queensland Premier who is to-day regarded as one of the most able statesmen in Australia. It is gratifying to note that even the Tory Premiers of the other States are prepared to follow the lead that he has so successfully given to the Commonwealth.

The Leader of the Opposition also cynically stated that the speeches delivered from this side of the Chamber would indicate that the depression commenced with the return of the Moore Government and vanished upon the advent of a Labour regime. It was a catastrophe for Queensland that both the Moore Government and the depression should have blighted this State at one and the same time. If Labour had been returned to power in 1929 when the depression was so acute, it would not have set about ruthlessly sacking public servants, some with twenty years' service to their credit, casting them on to the industrial scrap-heap with no employment available to them. The Moore Government failed to realise that every public servant dismissed meant a shrinkage in the aggregate spending power of the community and that every person placed upon short time meant a lesser purchasing power, too. Not content with this sacking, they increased the working week from forty-four hours to forty-eight. It will be remembered that during the last election campaign some of their candidates advocated a forty-four-hour week; later on they made references to the adoption of a thirty-six-hour week. Evidently they could not make up their minds whether the working week should be one of thirty-six, forty-four, or forty-eight hours, but I believe that if this State had been so unfortunate as to see their return a forty-eight-hour week

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would have been imposed throughout the State.

The Leader of the Opposition complains that no reference is made in His Excellency's Speech to the application of Labour policy. Surely he does not expect the policy of the Labour Party to be set out in every Speech delivered by a Governor in this Chamber! The majority of the people of Queensland know the Labour policy; they realise what Labour stands for. Labour stands for work and wages for all the people and Labour will endeavour to place all employees on part time employment once more back in full time industry. That is why Labour was successful at the polls. Our political opponents have stated that they are not opposed to a reduction in hours or to an increase in wages, but I would remind them that their electioneering proposal of motherhood endowment meant a reduction in the wages of 75 per cent. of the workers of Queensland. In framing their proposal they took very fine care to see that their wealthy friends who stand to them in every election fight should not be called upon to contribute towards the cost of their proposal and that the money would be contributed entirely by the working class. One of their candidates, during the election campaign, appealed to the single girls to think of the future and to vote for Nationalism and motherhood endowment. Probably it would have been many years before the single girls to whom the appeal was made would have been eligible for any benefits under such a scheme.

I desire to congratulate Labour Governments of the past on the excellent legislation they passed in the interests of the people. One need only cite the enactments that created the State Government Insurance Office and the provision for workers' compensation, in addition to the establishment of a Public Curator's Department, to have evidence of the monument that stands to-day to Labour's foresight and interest in the welfare of the people. We know how bitterly hon. members opposite opposed such legislation, how earnestly they endeavoured to prevent the establishment of the State Government Insurance Office, actuated, doubtless, by the fear that such an office would enter into competition with concerns owned by their wealthy friends, who as a consequence would receive smaller dividends, and as a further consequence, have less money to spend in the fight against Labour at election time. Thanks to Labour the humanitarian provision for workers' compensation remedied a state of affairs under which men, women, and children were the innocent victims. I remember in my boyhood days at Gympie it was no uncommon spectacle for a miner leaving home hale and hearty in the morning to be brought home a corpse at night as a result of a mining accident. In most cases the widow and children were left destitute, and invariably the deceased miner's workmates would subscribe £20 or £30 for the widow to tide her over her difficulties until she could secure work for herself or any of her children who might be able to work. Thanks to a Labour Government that unhappy state of affairs has gone. The hon. member for Bundaberg, and probably the hon. member for Toowoomba, will remember one case where the late Andrew Fisher advised a widow to fight a mining company for compensation

for the loss of her husband. That was the commencement of workers' compensation in Queensland, and just as in those early days Labour fought for the benefit of the workers, so to-day Labour stands four-square behind the workers of Queensland. I am indeed proud to belong to such a party.

I congratulate the Government on commencing work at the new Jubilee Bridge at Kangaroo Point. On numerous occasions reference has been made to this bridge, and it has been rightly stated that such a bridge constructed by the Brisbane City Council would have been infinitely preferable to the Grey Street Bridge, which is of very little use and which would not have been constructed had vested interests not prevented the building of the bridge at a more suitable point.

The construction of the Stanley River dam is also a work of which I approve. Fifteen months ago I fought a municipal election, and, with my colleagues, stated that the advent of a Labour Council would bring to fruition the proposal to construct this dam. It was asserted by our opponents that the water requirements of the metropolis could be catered for by the existing facilities, but in my opinion if Brisbane experienced a drought two years in succession, Lake Manchester could not supply the water requirements of Brisbane for any considerable period. Thanks to the Labour Government and to a Labour municipality that dam, and a flood mitigation scheme generally, will now become an actuality.

To listen to hon. members opposite one would imagine that the Labour Government were actuated by a desire to crush the farmers, and that the only friends the farmers have in Queensland are the Opposition members. But these hon. members forget that in the past three years approximately £200,000 has been advanced to farmers and settlers throughout Queensland under a rural development scheme. In the work of developing pastoral holdings, grazing selections, and agricultural farms, full-time employment has been found for 14,000 men engaged in ringbarking, scrub falling, clearing, fencing, and water conservation undertakings. During the Moore regime the men employed on that work received £3 a week of forty-eight hours, but with the advent of Labour the full basic wage, with a parity in different districts, was paid for a forty-four-hour week. I know the trouble that occurred when the change-over took place. At that time I was a clerk in the Lands Office, and each week letters were sent to farmers and land agents requesting them to see that the award conditions were observed.

I listened attentively to the speech of the hon. member for Dalby, who said that Queensland is only a retail State. Probably the hon. member would like to see Queensland remain a retail State for all time, but he quite forgets that Queensland has a large number of manufacturing concerns, which are growing daily. The hon. member stated that goods could be produced more cheaply in Victoria than in Queensland. I could quote the clothing trade in Victoria, where there is no Arbitration Court award governing many trades. In the clothing trade in that State employees work in sweated shops and clothing is taken home by women who work at night time for a mere pittance. That clothing is then sent to the Queensland

market to compete with garments made in this State, where the employees enjoy award conditions and award rates of pay, and where the employees work forty-four hours a week and are treated as human beings and not as beasts of burden.

The hon. member for Toowong stated that the Labour Government splashed money about during their last year of office. The hon. member has forgotten that during the last year of office of the Moore Government they removed the super land tax although they had a huge deficit and needed that and all the other money they could get to tide them over. They were prepared to give their wealthy friends some benefit in the hope that their assistance would enable them to be returned at the next election. But the people of Queensland were not to fall again for promises such as "£2,000,000 for 10,000 jobs," and "Give the boy a chance."

I think the Bills forecast in the Governor's Speech will be of great benefit to this State. I should have liked to see included in that list of Bills a Bill to amend the Elections Act; and I trust the Attorney-General will introduce a Bill of that nature before the end of the session. Preferential and contingent voting should be wiped out, and the man who receives the greatest number of votes should be declared elected. Any man who has been through one election where the preference vote has operated has no desire to go through a similar experience. The hon. member for Warwick can bear me out in that statement. During one election I was 1,000 votes in the lead on the Saturday, and although my two opponents fought one another bitterly at the poll they had a gentleman's agreement to exchange preferences, and on the Sunday when those preferences were exchanged one of them was only 138 votes behind me. It was then stated, "You got there on a split vote, you were lucky to win, wait until we get you in a straight-out contest and we will see how good Labour is in Windsor." The people of Windsor demonstrated how good Labour was last May, because, instead of winning by 138, I had 1,300 to spare. The "Courier-Mail" then stated that the Labour Party would not let the Labour aldermen resign because they were afraid they would lose the seats; but when we resigned the people returned Labour representatives in our places with bigger majorities than we had won by at the previous election.

Labour claims that our Premier caused the Premiers' Plan to be altered, and some hon. members opposite claimed that Mr. Stevens was responsible for it. Here are the facts in print:—

"The original motion of Prime Minister Lyons was—

'That this Conference affirms its adherence to the Premiers' Plan and undertakes to meet interest and obligations and to continue progressively to reduce budget deficits.'

"By the advocacy of the Labour Premier, the final motion of the Conference was—

'That this Conference affirms its adherence to the principles of the Premiers' Plan of 1931, and undertakes to meet interest obligations, to continue progressively to reduce budget deficits, and to conduct a public

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policy with a view to reviving industry so as to restore normal employment to those of our citizens who have neither work nor wages.”

The Premiers' Plan was thereby converted into a plan that was for the benefit of the people of Australia.

I regret that the Minister for Transport is not present this afternoon, as I was going to suggest that he cause a new railway station to be erected at Albion that will illustrate to the people of the district that Labour will do something. No new Government building has been erected in that district for sixteen years, and it is time something was done. It would also demonstrate that Labour was carrying out a policy of reconstruction.

Members opposite inform us that since the advent of Labour Governments unemployment has increased. The “*Courier-Mail*” contains the following:—

“To-day unemployment is much reduced. Statistically it is represented as little greater than it was in 1929. The Government's liabilities on account of the public debt has been substantially reduced by internal and oversea debt conversions.”

Surely hon. members opposite will not assert that the “*Courier-Mail*” is wrong. In the eyes of Nationalism in Queensland this journal can never be wrong. As showing that Nationalism runs true to colour here is another extract, but taken from the “*Courier*” fifty years ago—

“Mr. Kates is to bring forward a motion in the Legislative Assembly this week that it is desirable that the Government should repurchase from the present proprietors the estates of Westbrook and Canning Downs, in the Darling Downs district, for the purpose of subdividing them and disposing of the land to small selectors. To us it seems that there is reason to consider that this scheme is brought forward quite as much in the interest of the large landholders who wish to dispose of the property at a higher price than they could obtain from private purchasers as in that of the selectors.”

At that time there was neither a Labour Government nor a Labour Party in power in Queensland.

Before concluding I desire to support the remarks of the hon. member for Mount Morgan regarding miners' phthisis. Victims of mining diseases should receive as much consideration as possible after they leave the mining industry. I am aware of cases where miners developed phthisis ten or twelve years after leaving the industry. It is then very difficult for the victims to pass the medical inspector for compensation on account of miners' phthisis. In my opinion if a man suffering from phthisis is able to prove that he has worked in the mining industry for a certain number of years his claim should be granted. It behoves the Minister in charge of the department administering this matter to give the suggestion the greatest consideration. The matter is one that affects hundreds of the citizens of the State. There is the instance of a near relative of mine who left the industry twenty years ago. It was not until three or four months ago that miner's

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phthisis developed. The man had been working in the industry for forty-five years without a break. Unfortunately for him he has been away from the mining industry for such a long period that he is prevented from claiming the full benefits of a phthisis pension. There should be an amendment in the Workers' Compensation Act to provide for such victims.

In conclusion, I trust that this House will faithfully discharge the responsibility imposed on it by the people of Queensland. As one of their representatives I shall endeavour to enable it to do so to the best of my ability. I intend to carry out my pledges to the Labour Party and stand loyally behind our leader in every measure that is brought down to put the ideals of the Labour Party on the statute-book of Queensland. Should I do this I have no fear that when the life of the present Parliament expires and I have to face my electors they will approve of my conduct by saying, “You have done your best; we will again return you as our representative.”

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. DEACON (*Cunningham*) [3.4 p.m.]: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see that it is you who have been elected to the office of Speaker of this Parliament, and also to find the hon. member for Buranda reappointed as Chairman of Committees of the Whole House. I do not know, Mr. Speaker, whether you will be so popular at the end of your term as you are to-day. Certainly there is a necessity for your being there.

During the course of the debate we have heard the confessions of many new and innocent members and a good deal of “humbug” from the old ones. No doubt, in the course of time hon. members new to this Parliament will lose their innocence. I foresee difficulties ahead of them in having a considerable number of their ideals adopted by the conservative members of the party who occupy the front benches. Numbers of the proposals they have advocated have already been tried out by the old conservatives and found wanting. In my opinion a considerable amount of their time will be taken up in fighting the members sitting on the front benches. To a certain extent I sympathise with the Government in their difficulties which have yet to be met.

The solving of the unemployment problem by the Government consists mainly in making people out of work public servants or putting them on the relief staffs. I do not know how long that can last, inasmuch as it is done by loan moneys.

During the last three years loan money has been plentiful. The history of Australia shows that that is not always so. Without regard to the Government in power, good or bad or of whatever party, there have been times when loan money has been difficult to obtain. It depends greatly on national income; and present indications show that we are due for a fall in national income.

In 1928, when, I think, the present Premier was Deputy Leader, the Government, were faced with that difficulty and the then Treasurer, Mr. McCormack, said he would not be a party to overcoming the depression by the spending of unlimited amounts

of loan money. He did not think that would cure the depression.

THE PREMIER: Is that why your party gave the money away?

Mr. DEACON: The question of lending money to the Southern States came up in that same debate. The present Premier was a Minister of the Government when the debate on that Bill occurred, and the then Treasurer defended the policy. He said there was nothing wrong with it and that the Loan Council, at any rate, had the right to take it.

THE PREMIER: He never said that. If he did he was wrong.

Mr. DEACON: I will read what he said in that debate. His exact words were:—

“Everybody knows that there is depression in Australia; but I do not think that depression can be cured by the lavish expenditure of borrowed money. I certainly will not be forced into that position. I would be unfair to the people I represent if I led them to believe that I could solve this unemployed problem—to use a colloquialism—merely by putting a stone in a hole in the road. It is not going to be solved in that way; it is merely going to be accentuated.

“The present Loan Bill is introduced to make provision for future borrowing. We have a cash balance in the Loan Fund primarily because we have not spent the sums budgeted for during the preceding years, and, secondly, because we have participated in loans floated by the Australian Loan Council, so that at one particular period we may have more money than we have immediate use for. There is nothing wrong with that. Under the arrangements with regard to the Australian Loan Council, the Commonwealth itself and the other States may take any surplus we have and use it, paying us interest on it.”

THE PREMIER: Are you quoting from Mr. Sizer's motion?

Mr. DEACON: That was the debate on the Government Loan Bill. I am quoting Mr. McCormack. At that time the Government had £500,000 invested in the South, for which they were receiving interest. There was nothing wrong with that. It was the practice for all Treasurers to lend money to other States for a short time, at interest, whenever they had more money than they needed. It was a saving to the State. There was not one Labour Premier during all these years who did not do that, and it was no disgrace to them. It showed good management. It does not show good management when we have the Government at the present time allowing money to remain idle, not earning anything and not employing anybody when they could get interest on it. That is bad banking and bad management. If the Treasurer is carrying out that practice at the present time he ought to be ashamed of himself. Certainly, his Labour predecessor did better than that.

This session will not be a long one, but it could be shorter with benefit to the State. It would not matter to the State if some of the promised legislation were never enacted. We could really cut the programme in half with benefit to the State.

It would save money. There is nothing in it for the unemployed. The Government are certainly determined to go on with the old policy of spending loan money to relieve unemployment, but what are the unemployed going to do the first time there is any shortage? It may come at any time. I do not know, and the Government do not say what action will be taken.

There has been no attempt on the part of the Government, nor has there been any suggestion, even by the Premier, that permanent work is to be provided. A road-building programme is well enough, provided the State can keep the men permanently employed, but if there is to be a vigorous construction programme one year with little or no work the following year, the position will become much more difficult not only for the working people but also for the State as a whole. The Government should at least have tried to place some of the unemployed in full-time employment so as to relieve them of the necessity of depending entirely upon relief work for a livelihood, for, after all, relief work is not full-time work, and is of little use, and even full-time work for a short period is not of much use; it must be continued to be of value.

One of the new recruits to the Government ranks suggested that the only solution was a universal reduction in the number of working hours. That is all right provided the people as a whole are willing to pay the price. Inevitably it must mean an increase in the cost of production, or, in other words, an increase in the cost of living. If hon. members opposite are willing that the cost of living should be increased by, say, up to 50 per cent., then the working hours can be reduced without any reduction in wages. Perhaps, sooner or later, some of the countries of the world will have to give consideration to the adoption of a shorter working week in certain industries, but that could not apply to the industry that I represent. A limited working day or week is almost an impossibility. Stock require regular attention over a wide spread of hours. A dairy could not be conducted on the basis of a twelve-hour stretch between milking and milking. It would be possible to provide for a short period of slackness in the middle of the day, but the purchasers of butter must remember that if that system is to be enforced then they must be prepared to pay at least 50 per cent. more for their butter. The scheme could be adopted on that basis in every rural industry, but are hon. members opposite prepared to accept that? Are they prepared to approach the working class with a suggestion that they should pay 50 per cent. more for all their requirements so that the unemployment evil may be solved on the basis suggested?

Mr. FOLEY: He would not object to that because his wages are based on the cost of living.

Mr. DEACON: If wages are to be fixed on the basis of the cost of living then increased wages would mean a still further increase in the cost of living. There would be a vicious circle. I hope hon. members opposite will bear that in mind when making their calculations.

I agree with the Government's proposal to improve the stock routes of the State. The Moore Government, who have been

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slated for practically every ill that has befallen the State, initiated this movement when they were in power. Boards were constituted to control and improve stock routes, and much useful work was done. Stock routes were maintained free of straying stock. Stock routes can be of little use unless they are kept free from straying stock and not allowed to become ordinary commons where everybody imagines he may depasture his stock.

If stock routes are to be kept for travelling stock, the grass must be allowed to grow on them, and grass pirates, who travel solely with the object of securing grass, should not be permitted on the stock routes. After all, if people are allowed indiscriminately to turn their stock on stock routes, the money spent on the improvement thereof will have been wasted, because to be of any advantage to the State, stock routes should provide facilities whereby travelling stock may be sent to market or to fresh country when necessary. The routes must be kept in decent order and camping grounds provided at regular intervals. District improvement boards were engaged in that work, but were abolished because they were unpopular—unpopular because they interfered with the privileges of some people who had the use of the roads for nothing. The boards fenced in reserves and took care of waterholes so that adequate facilities might be available for travelling stock. Nevertheless the boards were abolished by the Labour Government. Surely the experience of the drought will have shown the Labour Government the necessity of adequate stock routes.

One of the questions arising for consideration as a result of the drought and referred to in the Government's programme of impending legislation, is that of the conservation of fodder. I have some sympathy for the Secretary for Agriculture in his difficulties of which I have a full appreciation; but I do not think the problem could be solved by the proposal to tax sheep and buy fodder with the moneys so obtained. The hon. gentleman would not be able to get sufficient quantities of fodder at the price he proposed to pay. Moreover, he would buy only in good seasons. Every farmer has to save fodder for himself. Very few farmers who have stock of their own can afford to sell until the drought ends—and a drought only ends when rain comes. I represent a large part of the Darling Downs: as a matter of fact, thanks to the redistribution of the present Government, I represent an area that formerly had three members. In the whole of that area there is little more than sufficient fodder during this drought for the needs of the district and before the drought is ended the Darling Downs may be purchasing fodder from other States.

At 3.21 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES (Mr. Hanson, *Buranda*) relieved Mr. Speaker in the chair.

Mr. DEACON: I know there are some hon. members opposite who represent farming districts, but if there were more farmers on the Government side they would realise that the storage of fodder costs money; that it is not profitable to sell it except in drought years; that there is not a market for it in good years; that it represents a

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good deal of money invested; and that it is very difficult to get farmers to store fodder at the price that the Secretary for Agriculture calculated on paying for fodder under his scheme. As a matter of fact, the price suggested would not pay the basic wage; it would not pay half the basic wage.

Mr. POWER: Your Government paid only £3 a week of forty-eight hours to men working under the rural development scheme.

Mr. DEACON: That does not enter into the question, but one would imagine that a Government whose principle it was to pay the basic wage would be willing to pay for fodder a price based on the employment of labour at regular hours and at the basic wage. The prices on which the Minister is basing his calculations are not reliable. If the basic wage were paid and the ordinary working hours worked it could not be done at the price. In the average season it is quite impossible to engage in the growing of fodder as an industry. A man can only calculate on selling any surplus. Under the present state of affairs one could not raise the fodder in Queensland that would be sufficient to meet the requirements of a scheme such as that contemplated by the Minister. There is neither sufficient labour nor profit in industry to make it worth while. It is not worth while entering into the details of a scheme if it is not possible to provide the material necessary for carrying it out. It would be of greater advantage to this State if facilities were provided for the rapid transport of stock from places where drought conditions prevailed to places where food was available. It has been our experience during every drought that has prevailed in Queensland that some part of the State had plenty of feed. During the 1902 drought there was plenty of feed in the Gulf country, and there were fat cattle there that could not be moved owing to the fact that they would have had to traverse waterless and grassless country before they could arrive at the railhead. The railways should be linked up in such a manner that it would be possible to transport stock from drought-stricken areas to areas where good feed prevails. It would be of advantage if the Charleville to Blackall line were constructed and the line extended from Dirranbandi, which would link up the Gulf country with the very south of Queensland. This would provide a facility for shifting stock in drought time, and the saving in stock would pay for the construction. Much money is being spent in foolish ways on the relief of unemployment. A heap of money is being spent in this city on work that will not return any interest. It would have been of advantage to the State if that money were invested in railways that could be used for transporting stock in drought time, and it would be a much wiser plan than the suggested fodder conservation scheme suggested by the Minister. In my opinion it would be much cheaper to bring the stock to the fodder.

It is necessary that all means of transport that will assist in the development of the back country should be assisted. Motor transport should be allowed greater facilities than it is getting at the present time. I do not say it should be absolutely unrestricted, but I do consider that the present fees charged for heavy motor transport vehicles are beyond reason. No doubt we

shall hear more about the Government proposals.

The Government are faced with many difficulties. Any assistance that hon. members opposite can get from solid criticism from this side of the house will be very willingly given.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. O'KEEFE (*Cairns*) [3.30 p.m.]: I offer my congratulations to the newcomers to this House. They have delivered very fine speeches, and when I make that remark I do not forget the hon. member on the Opposition benches.

The hon. member who has just resumed his seat has criticised the programme of the Government as set forth in the Speech delivered by His Excellency. However, the hon. member, during the course of his address, gave the Government no assistance as regard the legislation to come before this House in the near future. The foreshadowed legislation designed to assist people engaged in wool-growing—the industry of greatest importance to the State—is long overdue. The scheme for the conservation of fodder suggested by the Secretary for Agriculture and supported by the Government leads in the direction of serving the purpose. Like the hon. member for Cunningham, I have come to the conclusion that the conservation of fodder to protect the assets of the State will be very costly. In 1927, I think, I spoke from this side of the House on this question. At that time I was very much in favour of a Commonwealth scheme of fodder conservation, but after conversing with people greatly interested in the industry, I had to bow to the judgment of those who knew. In my opinion, the scheme will have to proceed further than the conservation of fodder, especially under the ordinary conditions of growing and distribution. I fail to see how it would be possible to proceed in such a roundabout manner as to purchase fodder here and there at the present prices and with the present conditions of distribution. I cannot see how it would prove a payable proposition to those engaged in the industry had they to purchase at those prices in order to keep their stocks alive. There are so many different interests regarding the raising of sheep and the resistance of drought. Some of the men carrying on the industry in the western portions of the State, in the so-called desert country, protect themselves against drought conditions by making it a rule to send away their male stock, the sheep from which they intend to breed at a later date being kept as long as possible on the richer parts of their holdings. My contention is that a sheep-grower would not be repaid for keeping his male stock for any length of time. The life of a wether is not very long, and a drought of two or three years would last for practically the life of that sheep. From the suggestion emanating from those in the industry, it would appear that the conservation of fodder for the feeding of sheep was not worth their while. They contend that they should receive some assistance from the Government, and that assistance should be in the form of a reduction in rentals, rates of income tax, and so forth. I cannot agree with this argument, even though it is advanced by those who claim to be experienced and have worked all their lives in the wool and sheep industry. I fail to see how this asset of the State

will be saved if the Government reduce income tax or rentals.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: It will help.

Mr. O'KEEFE: I agree. Anything is a help, but these reductions will not save the sheep from dying. My contention is that something must be done whereby the lives of our breeding sheep will not be jeopardised during periods of drought. The Government are giving great assistance to sheep owners at the present time, and will continue to do so. They have already allowed a rebate, for a period of twelve months, of 35 per cent. on the railway carriage of sheep and cattle for re-stocking after drought. The carriage on wool has also been reduced by a further 10 per cent. The operations of the wool relief provisions are extended for a further twelve months from the 1st January of this year. The annual value of that concession is estimated to be £96,000, which, if added to the reduction granted over the previous three or four years, makes a total of £423,000. Those figures should prove to the members of the Opposition, who are attacking the Government for not giving assistance in this direction, that the Government are doing something to improve the situation.

The feeding of sheep is a very costly item, especially under present conditions. I remember going out in 1927 to sheep areas in the Central West with the then Secretary for Railways, the present hon. member for Rockhampton, and the present Secretary for Agriculture. Upon making inquiries as to the cost of feeding sheep, we found that maize, which was grown on the Atherton Tableland, and which I knew was being sold at Atherton for £12 a ton, was purchased by the big financial institutions, such as Goldsbrough, Mort, and Co., Ltd., and Dalgety and Co., Ltd., and others who were operating in the West, and sold to the sheep owners for as much as £23 and £30 a ton landed at Longreach. That proves that under the present scheme of distribution of fodder it would not pay the sheep man to feed sheep. I, therefore, contend that the Government would be wise, before passing legislation for the conservation of fodder, to guarantee to purchase the whole of the product at a certain figure, thus knowing what it was going to cost the sheep grower to feed his sheep in times of drought.

The hon. member for Cunningham said that the Government would be wise if they improved railway facilities for the handling of stock during drought periods. I go a little further than that, and say that we may improve our railway facilities for all time. I think that the day has come when the cattle and sheep growers prefer to use the railway instead of the road. I heard a very prominent grazier remark the other day that he would prefer to see expended on the railways the amount of money the Government intends spending on the improvement of main stock routes by water and other means. I suggest that it would be a very good scheme for the Government to go on with the construction of that link in the railways between Charleville and Blackall. It would serve a great number of graziers in that area, giving them the opportunity of taking the sheep over the border into New South Wales, through Bourke, and in no way would it interfere with any of this State's trade. The boggy has been set up for many years that if this link were

constructed it would tend to take trade into New South Wales to the detriment of Rockhampton, Townsville, Brisbane, and other big centres. I do not pay much attention to these bogies. We have heard from time to time that if we constructed our main roads parallel with our railways the railways would have to close down.

In very many parts of the State roads exist parallel to the railway lines but the traffic figures at our disposal clearly show that despite this fact the Railway Department has been able to secure a greater share of traffic than it has had for many years past. That is a sufficient reply to the contention that the construction of further railways may act to the detriment of this State.

I also advocate the provision of more adequate facilities for the handling of stock in both good and bad seasons. If additional railway links were constructed the sheep grazier and the primary producer generally would have increased and improved loading and transport facilities, enabling him to obtain access to the pastures in various parts of the State, and over the border in New South Wales, which are denied him at the present time unless he is prepared to transport his stock by a very circuitous route. In 1900 or 1901 I was engaged to drove about 18,000 wethers from Katandra Station near Winton, picking them up at Barcardine. Those sheep were on the road for practically eighteen months. They were shorn at Salfern Creek and were offered to the Lake's Creek Meat Company at 7s. 6d. a head off shears, but as the meatworks desired to take them in draft lots, a proposal that was not acceptable to the owners, we were compelled to drove the sheep towards the Darling Downs. On the way more acute conditions were encountered and the sheep were again turned, completing their long journey somewhere along the north coast near Miriam Vale. After being on the road for approximately eighteen months they were sold to the Lake's Creek Company for 5s. a head, carrying eighteen months' wool. I am satisfied that if the owners of the sheep had availed themselves of the railway facilities to convey their sheep, say, to distant pastures or to acceptable markets, they would have saved themselves many thousands of pounds.

That leads me to say that I am completely at a loss to understand why the people so vitally concerned in the question of drought losses should reject the proposal by the Secretary for Agriculture for their alleviation without offering an alternative suggestion beyond income tax concessions or a reduction in land rentals. Surely these gentlemen, whose most vital interests lie in the protection of their flocks, have sufficient enthusiasm and initiative to suggest a much more beneficial arrangement than that!

At 3.45 p.m.,

Mr. SPEAKER resumed the chair.

Mr. NIMMO: Encourage them to store the stuff themselves.

Mr. O'KEEFE: That would be one way.

Mr. NIMMO: Give them cheap railway freights.

Mr. O'KEEFE: A board could be established and with the assistance of the Government it could, in bountiful seasons, purchase

[Mr. O'Keefe.

surplus fodder to be stored in suitable places to be available in time of need. This would be one way of saving many thousands of our valuable breeding sheep. Of course, it would hardly pay to feed wethers or even culled ewes, but it would certainly pay the country to adopt some scheme to save our valuable breeding sheep. In the Central district large areas of desert country are reserved for use in drought periods and on to this country male sheep are turned so that grass may be conserved in the wool-growing areas. In the Charleville and other districts edible scrub is available to the sheepowner, who by means of lopping is able to keep his sheep alive for a long period despite the absence of grass. I was interested to learn from an article written by one undoubtedly qualified to speak concerning drought conditions in our pastoral areas that unfavourable weather conditions were not the sole reason for the ravages of a drought. He pointed out that overstocking of paddocks was just as fruitful a cause of loss as any dry spell and that the cloven hoof and the teeth of the sheep brought about a greater destruction of grass than any severe drought. That is perfectly true. Since I worked in the industry, which is many years ago, I have noticed a great shortage of the natural grasses in our western districts, and I venture to say that where, twenty-five or thirty years ago, there were three tufts of Mitchell grass, to-day there are only two. Something should be done to recover that 33 per cent. loss in our natural grasses, and I suggest that people engaged in sheep raising should be compelled by the Government to set aside a certain area of land, closely fenced and stock proof, on which grass should be allowed to grow and through the agency of the winds propagate the grass seed, thereby helping to recover the lost grass to which I have referred. It is important that action should be taken either voluntarily or compulsorily, for we cannot afford to continue losing such a valuable asset. After all, the land in the final analysis belongs to the State, and any arrangements for new tenures should make some provision for the preservation of the natural grasses.

I commend to the serious attention of the Government the advisability of constructing the railway line between Charleville and Blackall, which would not only provide access to lands on which plenty of fodder is available when drought conditions exist in the sheep areas, but also obviate many weeks of driving under conditions that are far from satisfactory, for notwithstanding that we may improve many stock routes by the provision of water, sheep cannot live on water alone. Thus it is that I commend the construction of a railway that would mitigate sheep losses, and, at the same time, ease the unemployment position, in that the construction of the railway would give useful work to a great number of persons. I estimate that, at least, 1,000,000 sheep would be saved per annum. I base that calculation on the assumption that in a major drought approximately 6,000,000 sheep are lost, and that droughts recur in Queensland every five or six years. At an approximation of 10s. a head the saving to the State would represent £500,000 a year, and even if the suggested railway line showed a loss during normal times, that

loss would be offset in the abnormal periods, when drought losses are exceptionally heavy.

I hope the Government will give that matter due consideration, and I trust will exclude from their minds the suggestion that it may damage the interests of some other city by taking trade away. Droughts have cost the State a tremendous amount of money during the past thirty or forty years, and our outlook on this matter should not be a parochial one. I trust the Government will see their way clear to have that line constructed. They would thus be meeting the wishes of the people in the sheep industry, and incidentally the work which would be of lasting benefit to the State would absorb some of our unemployed. If the Government do not introduce the legislation I suggest in regard to the preservation of our grasses I hope they will, through the Department of Agriculture, set aside an area of closely-fenced land in order to propagate sufficient Mitchell grass seed for distribution amongst sheepowners during the next few years.

From time to time hon. members opposite complain about the nature of the work on which the money that the Government are making available for the relief of unemployment is being spent. I am at a loss to know where the Government is wasting money. The policy of the Government is to grant subsidy loans to local authorities, and if the local authorities carry out the class of work mentioned by hon. members opposite, such as chipping grass, that is their responsibility. It is the policy of the Government to see that the money is spent on works that will give the maximum amount of employment and also be of lasting service to the State. I am not aware of any local authority in North Queensland that is spending the money obtained from the Government on any foolish undertaking. There is a vast area of land in the city of Cairns that is reclaimable, but it would cost a considerable amount of money to carry out this work. If the Government reclaimed that land I am satisfied the cost would be returned three or four times in the increased value of that land. Land suitable for building purposes is very scarce in Cairns because the site of the city is only about 3 feet above sea level. I appeal to the Secretary for Public Lands to give this matter further consideration, and I trust that he will be able to cause some improvement.

I desire to congratulate the Home Secretary on his efforts to make life a little more pleasant for those unfortunate people who have fallen by the wayside and whom society punishes by sending them to spend a number of months or years at Boggo Road gaol. Last week, in company with other hon. members, I had the pleasure of paying a visit to the new prison farm, and I feel that the work that is being done there is worth while. I extend an invitation to the Home Secretary to make a similar prison farm available for the treatment of offenders against our laws in North Queensland. The establishment of this prison farm is a step in the right direction and is much appreciated by the unfortunate fellows who, although they have broken the laws of the State, are prepared to do the right thing by any scheme that will help them to recover their self-respect and become once again decent members of society.

In conclusion I repeat my appeal to the Government to give further consideration to the construction of a railway linking Blackall and Charleville.

Mr. MAHER (*West Moreton*): I move the adjournment of the debate.

Question put and passed.

Resumption of Debate made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

The House adjourned at 4.2 p.m.